



The Role of Water Politics in Middle Eastern Diplomacy

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the pivotal role of water politics in shaping diplomacy in the Middle East, a region marked by historical conflicts and geopolitical complexities. Through case studies of the Nile River Basin, the Tigris-Euphrates Basin, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it highlights how water scarcity influences national security, agricultural productivity, and regional stability. The paper discusses the significance of cooperative frameworks like the Nile Basin Initiative and the challenges posed by unilateral actions, climate change, and socio-economic factors. It also evaluates the effectiveness of international organizations in mediating water disputes and fostering dialogue. The findings underscore the necessity of integrating water security into diplomatic strategies to promote sustainable peace and cooperation among nations in the region.

Keywords: Water politics, Middle East, Nile River Basin, Tigris-Euphrates Basin, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, water scarcity, Diplomacy.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape.

The Middle East has long been a region of geopolitical significance, characterised by complex elements of historical, cultural, religious, and political dynamics (Saeed, 2025). The region is the sacred birthplace and spiritual centre of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam and occupies a unique strategic position as it is situated at the junction of Europe, Asia, and Africa and of the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean (Koch & Stivachtis, 2019) bridging continents offers unparalleled connectivity, making it a natural gateway for international trade, commerce, and cultural exchange (HoG, 2024; ul Haq, 2019).

Historically, the region has also been a battleground for competing empires, colonial powers, and regional interests, leaving behind deep-seated grievances and unresolved conflicts. Currently, the region has long been faced with various crises such as conflicts, civil wars, terrorism, displacement, water scarcity and socioeconomic challenges. Amidst this complex landscape, global powers such as the US, Russia, China, and EU nations find themselves intricately entwined, navigating through the region's multifaceted crises with diverse interests and strategies (Saeed, 2025).

Importance of water resources in the region

Every country's survival is dependent on providing its citizens with necessities, the provision of clean drinking water being the chief necessity (Daud, 2023). The importance of water in the Middle East cannot be overstated. Water is a highly valuable and strategic resource in the Middle East, underpinning the region's economic growth, food security, and political stability (Azhar, 2024). The region is arid, but human and natural systems have interacted to determine relative water scarcity and abundance at different times and places (Hammer, 2018).

Furthermore, the region has several critical rivers, including the Nile, Euphrates, Tigris, and Jordan, which support agriculture, industry, and urbanization. Approximately, 80% of the available water in the Middle East is consumed by agriculture. Additionally, in Egypt, 98% of all water is used for the production of crops. The use of fresh water in crops has exceeded the use of human utilities (drinking, cooking, and washing) (Berman & Wihbey, 1999).

In the past, plentiful water resources did exist in some countries (e.g., the Nile basin in Egypt, and the Tigris and Euphrates basins in Iraq). But even in these countries, the continuous population growth and the inevitable use of water, the construction of dams in the upper reaches of catchments, and also advances in water extraction technologies have all caused a reduction in water supplies, which in turn could cause these nations to suffer from severe scarcity of water in the future (Azhar, 2024). Therefore, since water is a tool for achieving political, security-related, economic, environmental, and other goals, sovereignty over water is as important as sovereignty over land. (Salameh, Alraggad, & Harahsheh, 2021)

Moreover, the waterways of the region are the most strategic component for facilitating the export of enormous volumes of oil and natural gas as well as boosting the transatlantic commerce relationship between the Eastern and Western

worlds. Tankers and trading vessels often must pass through narrow channels, and chokepoints, including the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab-el-Mandeb, and the Suez Canal (Al-Adwani, Al-Sabah, & Al-Bader, 2021).

Due to the lack of fresh water in many countries of the Middle East, water is linked with state power. Consequently, this natural resource has become the reason for the game of power. Therefore, water diplomacy is especially significant in the Arab region as a strategic tool for sustainability and peace (Hefny, 2011). The competition for water resources is redrawing the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. Already considered a zone of conflict, stands poised to deteriorate into regional infighting over water allocation and accessibility (Berman & Wihbey, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

The Middle East faces a dire problem of water scarcity that is not only a danger to national security but also to the maintenance of international diplomacy. Haq, Bilal, and Qureshi (2020) due to its nature of an arid region with restricted sources of freshwater, countries in the region are competing over access to water which has serious implications to regional stability. Water is seen as one of the most important factors that lead to conflicts in many nations and it aggravates the existing tensions and grievances (Bani Salameh et al., 2016). Disputes over the shared water resources such as the Euphrates and Tigris rivers have partly contributed to heights of instability in countries like Syria and Iraq. Now, this scarcity not only impedes agricultural productivity and undermines food security but also withers social cohesion at risk of unrest and conflict (Daud, 2023). In addition, different nations will compete and have to deal with strained diplomatic relations when water becomes a priority, making it difficult to find compromises and regional peace. Therefore, the issues of water scarcity, national security and foreign relations, form the overall geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East, and it is therefore important to finally understand the nexus between these issues.

In essence, the major reason for this study is to assess the role of water politics in regional diplomacy in the Middle East. The research explores varying case studies to show how water disputes are intricately inextricable from diplomatic endeavours between neighboring states. For example, the Nile River and Tigris-Euphrates Bases represent examples in which water resources have played an important role in diplomatic negotiations. The study also tries to evaluate the effectiveness of international interventions in water conflicts and the roles of the UN and the World Bank. The research will use these interventions to evaluate them to highlight successful strategies and to identify gaps in how water diplomacy is currently being conducted. In the end, the purpose of this study would be to provide insights into how water politics can be better included in diplomatic frameworks to encourage stability and partnership in the locale.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

To study water diplomacy in the Middle East there are several theoretical frameworks to be understood. Water resources' interactions with diplomatic relations

between states can be interpreted and interpreted through the lenses of realism, liberalism and constructivism.

Realism holds that states pursue their interests relative to an anarchic international system focusing on power and security. Realism emphasizes competition between states regarding available water resources in the context of water diplomacy. This dynamic is most apparent in the Middle East, with arid climates and limited freshwater supply. The realist scholars believe that whether the nations would survive is more important than almost anything else, for them, and therefore conflict over water rights is often inevitable. For example, states outsource water control struggles among upstream and downstream countries regarding the Nile and Euphrates rivers as a way to exert their influence over essential water sources (Bani Salameh et al. 2021). This frame of reference points out the strategic significance of water as a national asset and a national power and security issue (Khan, & Hassan, 2020; Khan, Sarfraz, & Tabassum, 2020).

Whereas liberalism focuses on the prospect of cooperation and mutual benefit among states through institutions, norms and diplomacy. Rather, liberal theorists uphold that states will take an interest in collaborating in the area of water management based on shared interests like economic stability, environmental sustainability and regional security (Khan, Sarfraz, & Tabassum, 2020; Khan, Sarfraz, & Afzal, 2019). Riparian states do engage in dialogue and come up with cooperative agreements to solve common water problems like in the case of the Nile Basin Initiative. Its following suggests that while there is competition, these water resources are interdependent and states are prone to diplomatic solutions to keep states far away from conflict and stability (Hefny, 2011). Thus, the liberal perspective emphasizes that international institutions, or collaborative frameworks, act as a mechanism for responsible effective water diplomacy.

A complementary approach to constructivism is that which relates the social and cultural dimensions that define state behaviour. The thrust of this theory is that states' perceptions and interactions related to water resources are shaped by the identities, beliefs and historical narratives of states (Saba, Fatima, Farooq, & Zafar, 2021; Saba, Tabish, & Khan, 2017). For example, Egypt's connection to the history of the Nile River helps to develop its water issues and the negotiation with other Nile Basin countries (Nawaz, et al., 2024). Constructivist scholars argue that there is an important role played by discourse and social constructs to regulate diplomatic relations and Shared narratives and Mutual understanding can contribute to cooperative water management (Daud, 2023). This view emphasises the role of non-material factors namely identity and culture in affecting state behaviour and diplomacy (Nawaz, et al., 2024).

Exploration of historical water disputes in the Middle East.

Human civilization was born out of the Middle East's waterways. As ancient cities grew from thousands to millions, agriculture also expanded to support livelihoods, trade, and food security (Hall, 2024). Water and its supply systems have been both the causes and instruments of war. History is replete with examples of competition and disputes over shared water resources (Bani Salameh et al., 2021). If

we go back to the history of Middle Eastern region around 2300-2200 BC, ancient Egypt and Nubia were formidable competitors for control over key sections of the Nile Valley. Trade-routes, and sources of raw materials (O'Connor, 1993).

Furthermore, in 2450 to 2400 BC, surface water was diverted by Urukagina, King of Lagash and his son, to deprive the neighbouring land of Umma and its city of Girsu of water (Hatami and Gleick 1994). This border region, also known as Gu'edena (edge of paradise) which was the scene of conflict for centuries between Lagash and Umma over the Shatt al-Hai canal, is located in what is now southern Iraq (Kreamer, 2013).

In the seventh century BC, Ashurbanipal, the last of the great rulers of the Assyrian Empire, gained control over the water wells as a part of his strategy of desert warfare against Arabia (Bani Salameh et al., 2021). In the early 9th Century BCE, kings from Assyria began to seek military control of marketable trade routes Mesopotamia. Overall, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers played significant roles in the development of ancient Mesopotamia, including the rise and fall of Babylonia and Assyria. The connection between these rivers and the civilizations that developed along their banks is a key part of the history and mythology of the region. (Waters & Miller, n.d.).

According to Holsti, who has studied such conflicts from the sixteenth century to the Second Gulf War in 1991, these conflicts led to wars over resources, such as water and land. He concluded that conflict over resources is the primary determinant of wars between countries, because resources are the source of any country's wealth and the most important determinant factor of its strength. For instance, the main motivation behind the European colonial onslaught on Asia and Africa was the acquisition of resources (Bani Salameh et al., 2021).

Although countries mostly fight over oil, they can also fight over water. Until recently, non-renewable resources, such as oil, gas, and other minerals, were the primary causes of conflicts and wars between countries, and they are the main areas of interest of studies and international security analyses (Ahmed, & Imran, 2024). However, if water plays a role in economic and political power, it might also become the area of interest. In this case, access to water might become a determinant factor for starting wars, and water supplies can become subject to military invasion. At the geopolitical level and as the United Nations (UN) reported, water was a major factor of conflict in 45 countries in 2017, and related conflicts are on the rise.

And in most of the cases, hydropower is the main driver of water conflicts. This is due to the transition to a more decentralized and renewable energy economy, which is changing the geopolitical equation (Bani Salameh et al., 2021).

Current Studies and Findings

Reflecting recent literature on water politics, water resources are seen as intricately linked to foreign relations in the Middle East. As has been noted by scholars, water scarcity not only increases tension in the region but also triggers conflict and cooperation between states. For instance, Bani Salameh et al. (2021) state that the competition for shared water resources, such as the Nile and Euphrates rivers, has historically become a cause of dispute that threatens regional stability. Their analysis shows that water scarcity is an important influence on the decisions of national security and foreign policy, and demonstrates the necessity for a better water

management strategy.

Additionally, the roles of international organizations in the mediation of water-related conflicts have also been studied. Hefny (2011) highlights that the Nile Basin Initiative has proven to be a forum for dialogue among riparians in open governance and conflict resolution. Such cases call for diplomatic engagement and institutional cooperation to address water scarcity, the incentive not just of shared interests, but mutually beneficial agreements.

Existing frameworks for understanding water diplomacy are analysed for a growing acceptance of integrative approaches. According to Daud, (2023), traditional security paradigms that aim to focus on the military aspects alone are not enough to build ways for approaching contemporary water issues (Shahzad et al. (2022)). An alternative approach is needed that looks at the economic, environmental and social aspects (Akhtar, et al., 2020). It is a liberal position of cooperative strategy and norms for handling the common resources.

Indeed, current studies have embarked on constructivist theories that describe how historical narratives and cultural identities of the states have influenced state behaviour in water diplomacy. For instance, Kreamer (2013) pointed out that the diplomatic stance of Egypt on its negotiations with other Nile Basin countries is defined by the historical significance of the Nile River to Egypt. This awareness helps to underscore the understanding of the social and cultural environment within which state actions and perceptions about, and agential strategies towards, water resources operate.

In sum, the various factors of the interplay of water politics and diplomacy are discussed in current studies. The literature emphasises the need for collaborative frameworks and the integration of different theoretical paradigms to deal with the challenges of water scarcity (Ahmed, 2023). In the changing geopolitical landscape, water diplomacy will present states with a multifaceted nature that will be critical in ensuring stability and cooperation in the region.

Since there is a growing literature on the politics of water and its role in the diplomacy of the Middle East, there are a few gaps which require more research. Second, additional empirical work is required to assess how effective particular water management agreements and arrangements are for the Nile basin, such as the Nile Basin Initiative, the Tigris-Euphrates Agreement or others. Despite that, there is little that describes these outcomes through detailed case studies (Akhtar & Kayani, 2024).

Secondly is the area of attention of the implementation of the interface of the issue of climate change and that of water scarcity. According to the Azhar, Iqbal and Imran (2025) with water shortages getting worse because of climate change, understanding what it means to regional diplomacy and security in terms of climate change becomes increasingly important. However, the current literature usually dismisses the idea that environmental change affects state behaviour and diplomacy.

The third main weakness is the weakness of focus on grassroots viewpoints and the contribution of local communities to water governance. The voices could be combined to create a fuller picture of water conflicts and cooperation. It will help to fill the gap and complete our understanding of water diplomacy and its consequences

on peace and stability in the region as a whole.

FINDINGS

Case Study 1: The Nile River Basin

Overview of the Nile Basin Countries and Their Water Needs

The Nile River Basin is one of the most important water systems in the world, where different countries and populations are involved. The basin encompasses eleven countries: Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Egypt. The river's flow runs from East Africa traverses through the heart of the continent, and then flows into the Mediterranean Sea, knitting together these nations. Over 300 million people depend entirely on the water of the Nile for drinking, agriculture and industry (Hefny, 2011). Especially, Egypt and Sudan are highly reliant on the Nile; Egypt is a relied upon Egypt of about 97 per cent of their wastewater from the river (Daud, 2023). The Nile is not only an 'ordinary' source of water for Egypt but also the lifeblood of the nation, responsible for ensuring food security in a country with a rapidly increasing population, since 75 per cent of Egypt's croplands depend on it for irrigation and 90 per cent of its population lives along its banks. However, upstream countries such as Ethiopia and Uganda are experiencing rapid population growth economic development and rising water demand. For instance, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in Ethiopia sets out to generate over 6,000 megawatts of hydropower electricity (Bani Salameh et al. 2021).

Because of climate change and population pressure, however, water scarcity is becoming more obvious and these countries have competing needs that set up a complex web of geopolitical tensions. Water management within the Nile Basin has become a situation that demands the Nile Basin countries to co-operate as they confront the shared challenges.

Analysis of the Nile Basin Initiative and Its Diplomatic Implications

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) was formed in 1999 to demonstrate that Nile Basin countries can successfully cooperate to develop the Nile River and its resources. The roots of it lay in the awareness of unilateral actions by upstream countries putting the water security of downstream countries at peril in such instances as Egypt (Hefny, 2011). The NBI seeks to strengthen dialogue, build trust, promote regional cooperation and facilitate sustainable development and equitable water utilisation of the Nile.

The NBI has profound diplomatic implications. It has first of all created a platform for dialogue between countries traditionally in conflict over water rights. In concrete terms, the NBI provides a forum for negotiating, for instance, Egyptian concerns around upstream developments including the GERD. The Daud writes down the principles of solving water problems in the cooperation between member states of the United Nations (Daud, 2023).

Negotiations become complicated by various priorities and water needs among member states. One such example is Egypt's avoidance of relinquishing them or priorities, thereby, while the GERD has become a critical element for Ethiopia's economic development and energy consumption (Zainab, et al., 2023; Raja, et al.,

2022; Khan, 2021). The tensions stemming from this divergence are illustrated by the lengthy bargaining sessions that continued over the dam's filling and operation (Bani Salameh et al., 2021).

Additionally, there is a weakness in terms of a lack of binding agreements and enforcement mechanisms. Though it has helped bring the parties together to talk, the effort hasn't been able to come up with tangible results that fit all parties. Daud (2023) supports that the NBI has to enhance to a more robust framework that enables equitable resource sharing and response to the valid interests of all member states.

Generally, the Nile basin initiative concludes by pointing to both the opportunities for cooperation and the complications of water diplomacy in the Nile River basin. As a vital dialogue and negotiation forum, the processes of collaboration and collective management of water are taking at least as much effort to improve as the needs and priorities of the basin countries require. The diplomatic implications of the NBI, as the challenges of water scarcity and climate change become more severe, are likely to become ever more important in helping the region to be more stable and cooperative.

Case Study 2: The Tigris-Euphrates Basin

Examination of the Water-Sharing Agreements and Disputes Among Turkey, Syria, and Iraq

The rivers that flow through Syria come from Turkey and then into Iraq; the Tigris and Euphrates Basins are a critical water resource for Turkey, Syria and Iraq. However, there has been a constant dispute between the three countries regarding the management of these rivers through unilateral water development projects and differing national interests.

Until the beginning of the 1960s, the relations among Turkey, Syria and Iraq concerning water management were relatively harmonious. But shortages of water started arising as the number of people demanded more and more and the needs of farmers for agriculture increased. The Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), which involves building many dams and hydroelectric power plants, has had a big effect on the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. For example, the Ilisu Dam, part of this project, has been very controversial as it is estimated to lower Iraq's water supply by as much as 80 per cent, from 1975, and thus increased water scarcity in the countries downstream (Bilgen, 2018).

To this end, Iraq and Syria have in turn tried to negotiate formal deals to secure their water rights. Nevertheless, Turkey has stood in the way of such cooperation by prioritizing its energy needs and hydropower generation over cooperative water management. The lack of a binding legal framework to govern the shared waters has added further to the difficulty of negotiating, as a series of disputes and allegations of water weaponization ensued, especially in the case of Turkey's use of the military in the region.

The most important promissory note is the Memorandum of Understanding between Iraq and Turkey in 2009 which was aimed to guarantee a minimum flow of water from the Tigris and Euphrates. Nevertheless, the irrigation sector in Iraq has yet

to respond to these agreements in a significant manner, and Iraq remains burdened with the task of supplying sufficient water to sustain its irrigation sector (Rizzi & Mollinga, 2024).

Impact of Water Politics on Regional Stability and Conflict

The politics of the Tigris-Euphrates Basin have major implications for the stability and conflict in the region. Existing tensions among the three countries in competition for water resources could be exacerbated by the competition for water resources as climate change intensifies water scarcity in the region. It is known that the Tigris and Euphrates rivers are some of the most vulnerable watersheds on Earth, and studies suggest that climate change will lead to a drastic decline in water flow and further evaporation (Azizi & Leandro, 2025).

But they further make the situation more complex owing to the geopolitical dynamics of the region. Turkey's control of the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates gives it a valuable political and diplomatic tool in dealing with Iraq and Syria, and it plays upon it. That has aroused fear in both Iraq and Syria that Turkey may use its upstream position to get some sort of concession for some unrelated political issue, like security cooperation or trade.

In addition, water politics has also injured the Kurdish population of the region. The flooding of historically significant Kurdish lands as a consequence of dam construction has provoked human rights problems and generated anger amongst Kurdish groups. Implications for the internal stability of Iraq and Syria include the role of water scarcity in exacerbating ethnic tensions as well as contributing to social unrest (Climate Diplomacy, 2022).

The conclusion is that the Tigris Euphrates Basin typifies the interaction between water and regional stability. Despite the water-sharing agreements still being a point of dispute between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, there is an urgent need for a complete and binding cooperative water management agreement. With climate change colouring water availability now and further in the future, the odds for conflict over shared resources will likely rise, and the way to prevent it and encourage sound water governance will need to be managed diplomatically.

Case Study 3: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Role of Water Resources in the Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations

Water resources are a key element of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict both as a bone of contention and as a basis for cooperation. Water is a vital issue; both Israelis and Palestinians live in an arid region with limited water supply. Provisions of the Oslo Accords, taken in the 1990s, recognized how important water was and admitted to an equitable distribution of water resources. However, these agreements have not been easy to implement.

In 1995, the Oslo II Accord set up a mechanism for Palestinian self-governance for some parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the allocation of water rights. Specific water quotas were allocated for the Palestinians, but these quotas have often been insufficient given the increase in the Palestinian population since the start of the agreement. The Mountain Aquifer and Jordan River are taken over by Israel – which stands in sharp contrast to other sources of drinking water between Israelis and

Palestinians. Other reports state that Israeli settlers use 320 litres per day and Palestinians in the West Bank use 82 litres per day (RefWorld, 1995).

The great disparity of the water resources has been an impassable barrier for peace negotiations. Water scarcity exacerbates tensions, as Palestinians view Israeli control over water resources as a violation of their rights and sovereignty. This skill creates resentment and erodes trust between the two, a difficulty in reaching a lasting peace agreement.

Analysis of How Water Issues Exacerbate Tensions and Affect Peace Efforts

The hydraulic problems of the conflict are thoroughly entwined in the political and geographical conflicts. The water resources have come to symbolize power and oppression: a cause of conflict in a cycle. The issue of water management in Israel is widely known to have been and continues to be practised within 'hydraulic apartheid,' which translates to prioritising the needs of the Israeli settlements over those of Palestinian communities. This term embodies the inextricable connection between systemic inequalities in Palestinian access to and management of water, and the use of water as a mechanism, to the acute exclusion, of maintaining control over the territory.

The exacerbation of tensions stems from the fact that the impact of water scarcity on Palestinian agriculture and livelihoods has already been enhanced by water infrastructure construction. Irrigation is a major source of water use in Palestine, and restrictions on how much water Palestinian farmers need Israeli authorities to allow them to use for irrigation has caused large losses in agricultural output. Not only does this throw a question mark over food security, but it fuels economic instability in Palestinian community and gives rise to a breeding ground for conflict (Al-Muqdadi, 2022).

Furthermore, poor management of water, as well as the lack of proper water infrastructure, has led to the decline of water quality in Palestinian territories, where many communities are not receiving safely managed drinking water. In Gaza, about 89 per cent of the people do not have access to safely managed drinking water services, a case of water mismanagement that intensified a humanitarian crisis (Sultana, Ahmed, & Imran, 2024). The desperation felt by Palestinians under this situation instigates even more grievances against Israeli policies.

Since there is recognition of the importance of water resources in the peace process, there has been an array of initiatives for achieving cooperation on the shared water resources (Imran & Akhtar, 2023). Despite this, the ongoing conflict and a lack of trust between the parties, these efforts have often been undermined. This includes for example proposals for joint water projects, of which the political climate and security concerns have been an obstacle.

As a whole, water resources are a main factor in the Israeli -Palestinian conflict that influences and arouses tensions during negotiations. Water scarcity along with its humanitarian implications also raises challenges to the efforts of peace. Sustainable resolution of the conflict requires fair and equitable addressing of water issues between Israelis and Palestinians, which in turn paves the way for trust and cooperation to be developed between the two groups.

International Involvement and Mediation

International organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank and others, also intervene to resolve water disputes and to encourage cooperative water management between countries. They provide platforms for dialogue, technical assistance, and funding for water-related projects to consolidate collaboration and minimize critical water resource conflict. For example, the Nile Basin Initiative was facilitated by the UN in discussions among Nile Basin countries, which have promoted dialogue and cooperation on water management issues. Such as in the case of the Tigris-Euphrates Basin, the World Bank also supported various projects related to the improvement of water infrastructure and governance in which the equal share of water is highly emphasized (Jha & Mariyasin, 2024).

International intervention successes are often undermined by significant challenges. The lack of binding agreements and enforcement mechanisms makes it prone to noncompliance among states becomes one major challenge. For example, while the NBI has facilitated dialogue, it has struggled to produce concrete outcomes that satisfy all parties involved. Additionally, geopolitical tensions and national interests can hinder effective mediation, as seen in the Tigris-Euphrates Basin, where Turkey's unilateral water management decisions have complicated international efforts to promote cooperation. Furthermore, the complexity of local contexts and the need for tailored solutions can make it difficult for international organizations to implement effective interventions (OECD, 2024).

Comparative Analysis

Several common themes and strategies for addressing water disputes emerge in a comparative analysis of the case studies. Firstly, there is the presence of a prominent role of cooperative frameworks both generally and for the cases in question. The necessity of dialogue and collaboration among riparian states to address shared water challenges as shown in the Nile Basin Initiative and joint water management in the Tigris-Euphrates.

The second is the recurring theme of the role of power dynamics. In both the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates cases, there are high conflicts of influence upstream countries have on water resources with downstream countries. These dynamics highlight the necessity for an agreement that reflects the interests of all parties impacted.

Finally, all regions and peoples are facing a common problem of the impact of external factors like climate change and population growth. Thus, they aggravated water scarcity and turned negotiations into a difficult issue to resolve, demanding adaptive management strategies that can react to changing circumstances (Chibai, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Summary of Key Findings

The political dynamics of water resources in the Middle East are shown vividly in this thesis, through a focus on three case studies the Nile River Basin, the Tigris-Euphrates Basin and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The key findings suggest that

water scarcity significantly fuels regional tensions, which determine national security and foreign policy decisions. For example, the Nile Basin Initiative is an example of cooperative management, but national interests are divergent and there is an unequal distribution of water. In the same way, the complexities of control upstream and the absence of binding agreements render international mediation efforts more difficult in the Tigris-Euphrates Basin.

The Israeli Palestinian conflict brings to the front the impact of water resources in exacerbating the tension and its role in the rounds of negotiations for peace. The differences between levels of water in Israeli and Palestinian are amongst inequality and control that hinder trust and cooperation. Overall, the research emphasizes that although international organizations have helped mediate water disputes between nations, it remains a task that political reality and the problem at hand hinder.

Implications for Policy and Diplomacy

It is in the interest of developing water security diplomacy into the Middle East diplomatic strategy to foster stability in the region. Water issues are not only technical problems to be solved but deeply seeped into the socio-political fabric of the region. Proper emphasis should also be given to inviting the parties to establish equitable water-sharing agreements that will ensure the rights and needs of all of them.

Additionally, collaborative water management initiatives also provide confidence-building measures for dialogue and cooperation in a broader political context. In addition, for these initiatives to be more legitimate and effective, local communities can also be engaged in water governance to hear the voices of people whose destiny is closely connected with water.

International organizations play an important role in that dialogue making and technical support and in encouraging states to adopt comprehensive approaches that address the interrelated issues of water, security, and development under this context. In this way, water security could be prioritized in diplomatic frameworks and may open up spaces for sustainable peace to the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several areas in which future research needs to be advanced to enhance understanding of water diplomacy and conflict resolution. Empirical studies of the effectiveness of existing water-sharing agreements, along with lessons and best practices learned could inform ‘lessons learned’ about planning and implementing successful water-sharing arrangements.

Second, understanding the effect of climate change on the Middle East’s water resources is important because conditions that alter the environment will increasingly shape water availability and geopolitical dynamics.

Finally, drawing upon grassroots perspectives in water governance research can enrich the understanding of the local dimension of water politics and further enrich the basis for more inclusive and effective policy solutions. By understanding how community engagement is akin to water management, cooperation, and resolving the underlying grievances can be facilitated.

Final Thoughts

Achieving sustainable peace in the Middle East is impossible without the proper water politics. Water is a vital resource that crosses the boundaries of nations, and so does water's need for a cooperative framework of governance that acknowledges the interdependence of the fronts of the states and their people. Water diplomacy is also an effective way to create trust and enhance collaboration in the region where people tend to be divided.

Stakeholders can focus on water issues within peacebuilding efforts to build a future where the water right is realized in ways that contribute to stability, development, and coexistence in the Middle East. While the path ahead may be difficult, the possibility of water uniting rather than dividing is a hopeful way forward in seeking to promote lasting peace.

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