

A Study of Diplomacy for Transboundary Water Cooperation

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Transboundary water issues are evident in river basins that cross political boundaries. Issues arise among states with shared transboundary water when the quality of water degrades and the available quantity does not meet the rising demands for sustainable development. Lack of water resources among states often results in competition in transboundary water cooperation and in many instances, intensify into conflict. To date approximately 3,600 treaties exist on water cooperation, an achievement in its own. However, a closer look at the treaties reveals significant weaknesses. Records show that in the last 50 years, 37 cases of acute violence has taken place over disputes involving transboundary water sharing. Diplomatic relations with the provision of treaties and conventions prepared with the support of United Nations framework on transboundary water cooperation, with theories of realism and liberalism can bring an effective solution to the prevailing problem. A successful example of such water cooperation is the Indus River Commission, which survived two wars between India and Pakistan. Another is the framework for the Nile River Basin, home to 160 million people and shared among 10 countries. The objective of the study is to articulate a systematic source with diplomatic mechanisms backed by treaties and conventions that states can use to resolve transboundary water issues or prevent intensifying conflict. This can be reached by consensus, with two key principles to guide the conduct of states regarding shared watercourses; 'equitable and reasonable use' and 'the obligation not to cause significant harm to neighboring states'.

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