

Assess the view that water conflicts are inevitable (20)

Water conflicts are problems that arise from sharing water particularly where water basins are shared between countries. Furthermore, political tensions can arise from water conflict such as Palestine and Israel tensions whereby Israel were over abstracting underground aquifers which reduced supply for Palestinian civilians and caused insecurity within the region. Most water conflicts occur from water deficits in the hydrological cycle or issues between supply especially when water sources are shared between nations. Additionally, some nations are more prone to conflicts due to their economic status; when water is shared between countries of differing development levels higher income countries often use this to their advantage to dominate lower income countries which inevitable leads to conflicts e.g. Turkey and Syria. Finally, water management schemes such as dams such as the GERD dam can also lead to water conflicts whereby water supply is restricted between countries.

Firstly, water conflicts are inevitable due to increasing global population which then leads to an increased demand for water. Such as the issues surrounding the Nile river which is the longest river in the world and over 250 million people rely on the river for daily water use. The population dependent on the Nile is supposed to double by 2050 which increases the risk of water conflict. It is also estimated that in the next 10 years 35% of the water dependent population will be in deficit. Furthermore, political treaties between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia with restricted Ethiopia's access to the Nile which led to political tension over the Nile's water. This then led to Ethiopia building the biggest dam in Africa (GERD) to combat their exclusion from fair allocation of the Nile's water supply this caused huge political tension between the three countries because of their increasing populations and increased threat of water scarcity and deficit. Therefore, it is inevitable that water conflicts will increase in the future due to the constantly increasing population that increases the demand for water that is shared across different countries, which is not always equal increasing risk of conflict.

Furthermore, water conflicts are also inevitable due to the presence of global warming and its increasing threat which has large influence of the distribution and volume of water between countries. For example, the Colorado river provides water for over 40 million people across seven different states – political boundaries. The Colorado river water is divided between upper and lower basin states, with Mexico taking 10% of total flow, the states in the lower basin get 50% and the upper basin states get 10%. As a result of climate change the water stores have depleted to 48% and the annual river flow has decreased by 15%, this has caused conflict between states as water volume is reducing and pressures on the river are now building meaning finite groundwater stores are having to be used. The evaporation rate has also increased which has caused salinity levels to increase which further increases conflict as Mexico complained that high evaporation rates meant that the water they obtain is mostly unusable as it is too salty and desalination can be very expensive. These conflicts are inevitable as the water supply is reducing year by year. With additional problems surrounding the water treaty as this was signed in a year with abnormal supply meaning water rationing was incorrect for the following years when supply fell short. This caused huge conflicts between the states and Mexico because the 10% of total flow that Mexico need is not enough to meet their demands which has caused huge insecurity across the country as many rely on the river for their fresh water sources.

However, it could be contended that water conflicts are not inevitable due to the presence of water sharing treaties that promote cooperation between users and managers in a basin. For example, the United Nations aims to protect and ensure the quantity, quality and sustainable use of water

resources by helping with resolving water issues using the Helsinki water resource management. The Integrated Water resource management establishes that water is a socio-economic good that should be managed sustainably. Furthermore, the EU aims to restore rivers, lakes and canals to good condition. Additionally, Helsinki water convention of 1992 has been very significant in reducing water conflict by promoting water cooperation. It has proved very successful by improving water quality, human health and flood and drought mitigation. Additionally, it is long lasting as it is a signed treaty and operates on a global scale which increases its significance and chance for success. Overall, the increase of water treaties will reduce the risk of water conflicts as different countries begin to share water resources equally to meet demand. However, countries still may not follow by the rules which would increase conflict again.

Furthermore, the increase of sustainable water management strategies also helps to reduce the imposing threat of water conflicts. For example, Singapore have aimed to reduce the reliance on Malaysia and gain water independence to reduce water insecurity and conflict between the two countries. Singapore created 17 reservoirs and canal systems using only clean water to feed their demand. The results from their independence strategy were extremely successful because 5 new water plants will meet 40% of water demand and by 2060 desalination will supply 30% of water needs. Furthermore, the countries 4 tap system also allows them to reduce the chance for conflict between Malaysia because it allows them to use water from the basin that covers 2/3 of the island as well as imported, new and desalinated water. Furthermore, the presence of a water treaty between Malaysia and Singapore also helped to manage water supply and reduce the opportunity for conflicts as it is acknowledged by the United Nations and therefore by law the countries must follow the treaties. This demonstrates that Singapore's initiative to gain water independence from Malaysia was a successful water management strategy as it allows them to operate using their own water supplies which reduces conflict as they are no longer reliant on Malaysia.

In conclusion, I believe that water conflicts are inevitable because external factors are increasing the demand and stress for water. As seen in the Colorado and Nile rivers water is vital for thousands of people and with water sources being depleted by over abstraction and increases evaporation rates water insecurity grows which leads to more tensions between people that can grow to international conflicts and cause war. However, the presence of water treaties and sustainable management strategies has reduced water stress and has solved many water conflicts globally as there have never been any wars regarding water after water treaties have been put in place. These water management strategies involve ice stupas which is where man made glaciers are made in the winter which then provide fresh water supply in spring when they begin to melt which provides water for both domestic and agricultural use. Desalination also helps to reduce water conflicts as water can be taken from the sea and salt water can be removed as seen in Israel. However, this process can be very expensive, and it is vulnerable to energy price shocks which makes it inaccessible for poorer nations which may increase the risk of conflicts if not accessible for LIC's. Additionally, water treaties and management strategies are also not always successful as seen with Turkey's GAP project whereby the 22 dams across the country restricted Syria's share of the Euphrates by 60% and Iraq's share by 40% which led to huge political tension and Iraq threatened to bomb the dam as it impacted 50,000 people. Finally, I believe that water conflicts are inevitable and will increase in the future due to the increasing threat of political tensions, increasing population and global warming which can have detrimental consequences for many people across the globe.