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Water as a Non-Traditional Security Threat in the Global South

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Abstract: Non-traditional security concerns refer to difficulties that threaten the life and well-being of individuals and nations, which predominantly originate from sources other than the military. Water security in South Asia is a pressing issue, as this region is home to a significant portion of the global population and faces severe water scarcity. Many individuals in this area need more access to clean and safe drinking water. Due to climate change, water availability in this region will be more limited than in other regions worldwide. In this paper,the researcher analyses the water scenario in the Global South by applying critical securitisation theories and including the concept of hydro-diplomacy. This paper examines the intricate connection between non-traditional security threats and water-related concerns in the Global South to promote a more resilient future.

Keywords: Water security, Non-traditional security (NTS), Securitization, Hydro-diplomacy, Global South

The Global South has had several difficulties recently because of pollution, water scarcity, and other non-traditional security issues. These problems seriously endanger the people's immediate well-being and the areas' long-term stability and sustainability. This paper analyses the complex relationship between non-traditional security threats and water-related issues in the Global South to ensure a more resilient future. In the post-Cold War era, the conventional security paradigm, which focused on military threats, territorial integrity, and state sovereignty, encountered substantial difficulties. The problems originated from two primary sources: theoretical insights from intellectuals like Mahbub Ul-Haq and Amartya Sen and institutional initiatives undertaken by the Canadian government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The 1994 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was the inaugural global publication to provide a precise definition of "human security. According to Haq, human security

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focuses on ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals rather than prioritising the security of nation-states (Haq, 1994).

In 1991, the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance published a paper called "Common Responsibility in the 1990s." The paper identifies prevalent non-military security issues, such as water scarcity and environmental degradation (Bajpai, 2000). The effects of water shortage on both state and human security have been well examined and documented. The Human Development Report of 2006 provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of water scarcity on the viability and progress of communities.

Ohlsson (1995) argues that water scarcity threatens society's progress and advancement. It is the most significant barrier to advancement, prosperity, well-being, and even the security of a state, according to Cooley (1984), Falkenmark (1990), and Myers (1993). Following the end of the Cold War, there has been a redefinition of the concept of "security," resulting in the recognition of "non-traditional" or non-military factors that pose risks to security. Non-traditional security (NTS) encompasses several concerns related to human security, such as infectious illnesses, food scarcity, and climate change. Non-Traditional Security (NTS) encompasses several human security concerns, such as mass migration, transnational crime, infectious diseases, food and drug trafficking, and climate change. Experts have identified a correlation between human security and progress. Historically, discussions on national security have typically excluded Non-Traditional Security (NTS) issues, such as territorial invasion. Transnational actors often need to be engaged in addressing these challenges.

Securitisation Theory and Water Security

The field of security studies witnessed the emergence of the Copenhagen School during the early 1990s. The Copenhagen School posits that security is not an objective state but a consequence of a distinct social process. In other words, considering a "referent" matter as a security problem is a political decision (Weaver, 2011). This choice is made using "speech acts" or "securitisation moves". However, it is inadequate for a situation to be recognised as securitised by more than one individual. Busan, Waever, and de Wilde (1998) define securitisation as an “inter-subjective process.” The continuous discourses occur between the "securitising actor," who introduces the issue, and the audience, who has the power to determine whether to accept it. So, enforcing securitisation is not a viable choice.

Recent studies have built upon and enhanced the principles of the Copenhagen School, broadening the scope of situations in which securitisation can occur. Davidsen (2010), Warner, (2011) and Zeitoun (2007) provide a more comprehensive analysis of how environmental security is socially constructed. The proponents of this school examined

both tangible and hypothetical dangers arising from socially constructed perceptions of the environment, as well as genuine threats to and from it. Examining narratives and discourses helps answer the issue of "who securitises what and how" concerning environmental security. Transboundary water is the natural resource most likely to be securitised.

Fischhendler (2015) distinguishes between two sorts of security: "strategic security," which is linked to an international river basin's hydrology and connects all riparian states through a complex web of interdependencies on the environment, the economy, and politics. He uses "tactical securitisation" to describe the second type of securitisation. This phenomenon arises when "high politics," such as national security, get intertwined with "low politics," such as the 1994 peace agreement between Israel and Jordan. Once securitisation has occurred, then extraordinary actions to neutralise the threat are frequently justified. According to Buzan et al. (1998), securitisation is considered a breach of usual political practices since it introduces issues outside the scope of regular politics.

Structural, institutional, and linguistic are the primary instruments to securitise water. As a result, several structural measures are implemented to make these water systems more secure. These measures include setting up early warning systems and creating demilitarised zones around them (Fischhendler, 2015). However, with the institutional procedures that put structural mechanisms into practice, they are justified. The presence of foreign affairs or military representatives in basin authority is one example of an institutional system. For example, this is the situation with the Nile Council of Ministers and the Nile Basin Initiative. As is the case of the Oslo Peace Accords between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, another technique is integrating water agreements into agreements about greater security (such as peace treaties). The absence of NGOs and civil society from governance is another example of institutional securitisation (Fischhendler, 2015). Finally, Fischhendler refers to language's crucial role in identifying and characterising a problem as a danger and generating a feeling of urgency as "linguistic securitisation." It has storylines, framings, and metaphors.

The term "Water Conflict" is an often-used metaphor. Water resources in many transnational river basins in Southern Africa, including the Okavango River basin (Turton, 2003) and the Tigris and Euphrates, have been identified as a matter of national security. In the conflict between India and Nepal regarding the Tanakpur Barrage, India employed different strategies to address the issue. Initially, India used language securitisation, followed by structural securitisation by unilaterally constructing the dam. Finally, India resorted to institutional securitisation through a bilateral agreement, which resolved and prevented future conflicts. This information is based on Mirumachi's 2013 analysis. In Zeitoun (2006), the

author emphasises the role of power imbalance in creating and perpetuating water conflicts that are less lethal than conventional warfare (p. 435).

They contend that the power imbalance among the basin governments mainly determines the substance and scope of water allocation agreements. Discursive power is employed instead of physical force to create agreements that benefit the most potent basin state receiving water allocations by constructing threats. These dominant powers in water management might employ various strategies to ensure their control over shared water bodies and compliance with the established rules. Securitisation is a strategy that the more vital riparian state might use, among other options. This study argues that securitisation is the rationale behind these techniques. Due to its capacity to securitise its water interests in the global system, the dominant riparian state might exert "coercion" on other riparian nations to adopt inequitable water distribution arrangements. Due to its capacity to securitise its water interests in the global system, the dominant riparian state, a hydro-hegemon, can exert pressure on other riparian nations to adopt inequitable water distribution arrangements.

On the other hand, the latter group, which has a lower power position, typically needs to do so. For instance, Egypt has effectively thwarted any genuine endeavour by upstream countries from initiating such projects for many years by asserting that any upstream construction of dams would be considered a casus belli if it negatively impacts Egypt's water allocation. In this scenario, Israel's commitments to ensuring water security take precedence over the concerns raised by Palestinians over its control over the West Bank aquifers. The international community seems to accept the biassed water arrangement resulting from these mechanisms, reinforcing the dominant discourse and excluding alternative viewpoints. However, the securitisation mechanisms discussed earlier do partially limit these disputes. Therefore, power distribution impacts the results when no universally recognised governing body can implement international water regulations. To summarise, the riparian state with the most incredible power can prioritise its water discourse by utilising its institutions, structures, and language. This often comes at the detriment of weaker nations, even if those nations are genuinely facing a crisis rather than one that is artificially created.

Water Security in the Global South

Water security includes the capacity to manage water resources effectively and the availability of safe, clean water. Fast urbanisation, population increase, and climate change exacerbate water stress in the Global South, causing shortages in many areas. In addition, poor water management techniques, pollution, and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate these

problems and disproportionately harm marginalised populations.

Thomas Naff and Ruth Matson (1984) argue that water plays a significant role in riparian state relations in the Middle East, both on the surface and underneath. Bulloch and Darwish (1993; Soffer, 1999; Starr & Stoll, 1988) also backed this and established a direct correlation between water and security. This view gained support from academic communities and was endorsed by prominent politicians, like UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who warned that future conflicts would centre on water rather than oil in March 2001.

Definition of Water Security and Its Elements

Water is essential for the existence of life. It provides vital energy sources for the three fundamental sectors of society: transportation, energy production, and agriculture. Furthermore, it is necessary for essential health and hygiene. Water security is a prerequisite for national security. Water is a vital resource for ensuring the stability of any country on Earth. To fully understand water security, it is necessary to consider its impact on the political, economic, social, and environmental aspects and its immediate availability. Climatic variability and change lead to shorter rainy seasons, longer dry seasons, unexpected rainfall patterns, and extraordinarily high temperatures. These changes negatively influence people's lives and their ability to make a living. Diminished water resources lead to increased adversity for individuals and a heightened likelihood of instability, violent confrontation, and migration. The places that experience the most significant effects of environmental changes are often the ones with the lowest economic status and insufficient resources to manage water effectively.

The Sustainable Water Partnership (SWP) initiative offers a pragmatic and scientifically based approach to water security, considering the local region's distinctive geographical and cultural factors. It considers socioeconomic, environmental, and political factors and uncertainties related to information, science, and technology to offer robust answers. As defined by SWP, water security refers to the capacity to effectively adjust and guarantee the sustained provision, accessibility, and safe utilisation of an ample quantity and high standard of water for the well-being of humans, livelihoods, ecosystems, and thriving economies. SWP enhances water management by establishing stronger connections between water, food, and energy security while boosting climate resilience. This approach considers different socioeconomic and environmental conditions.

Water security is vital in many important areas for human society to function. First and foremost, access to clean water is essential for human existence since it allows for hydration, cleanliness, and sanitation. Second, water is vital to maintaining livelihoods because it powers vital operations like transportation, energy generation, and agriculture, all of which are

necessary to ensure the provision of other basic needs. Thirdly, a productive economy requires water security since economic growth and stability depend on people's capacity to support themselves, and increased water availability stimulates various livelihood activities. Fourth, water availability significantly influences ecosystems; as a result, many livelihoods and the resources they provide are at risk due to their degradation. Finally, prudent water management helps to lower the risk of disasters by lessening the effects of predictable stresses like population expansion and climate change, as well as unforeseen occurrences like floods or political unrest. By encouraging stability, this proactive strategy averts the creation of violent conflicts and migration.

With a focus on including local leaders, engineers, and community members, SWP offers a complete approach to water security. This enables us to evaluate and handle all dangers associated with water in a region, including those that bureaucracy tends to ignore, such as the issues raised by marginalised socioeconomic groups. Stated differently, SWP increases the ability to manage water resources cooperatively. These capacity-building initiatives can take many forms, such as creating, maintaining, or improving water networks and structures, advocating for green infrastructure, reforestation, erosion control, wetland restoration, or starting behavioural and regulatory reforms. We provide water users with the resources they need to manage their present water hazards and those they might encounter in future. Rather than entrusting critical water choices to ignorant government officials, we convene diverse people to reach a mutual understanding. Our science-based, adaptable solutions are customised to meet the difficulties of location, resource availability, and cultural dynamics.

Water availability is the foundation of water security. Sufficient water is necessary to meet many, often contradictory demands. Of course, accessibility is useless unless water is likewise easily accessible to the typical person. The capacity to move, store, provide, control, and save water is essential for good water management.

Water cannot be considered accessible until everyone gets access to it, regardless of social standing, even when these qualities are present. This implies that enough quality water is accessible, economical, and distributed equitably. Still, there needs to be more water right now. Water supply needs to be sustainable; it needs to last throughout time despite other social, environmental, and political concerns, as well as climatic change and fluctuation. A surplus of complacency poses one of the biggest challenges to the security of water resources. When water is accessible and available, people may become overconfident and fail to prepare ahead, wasting resources.

Water security includes universal access, availability, and stewardship,

which is the responsibility of water managers and users to safeguard water resources and related ecosystems. Water used responsibly keeps it accessible and ensures plenty for everyone to consume, including the environment. It safeguards the consistency and predictability of the water supply rather than allowing it to become unpredictable or wasteful. Lastly, using clean water encourages adaptability. Communities that sustainably manage their water resources strengthen their capacity to endure, bounce back from, and adjust to water-related hazards. In 14 countries throughout the globe, SWP's participative and adaptable methodology has already provided complete management solutions. By working together, we can guarantee the sustainability, accessibility, and availability of water for future generations.

Water as a Non-Traditional Security Threat

Caballero-Anthony (2016) defines Non-traditional security (NTS) concerns as non-military threats with specific vital criteria. First, these dangers are transnational, emerging from and impacting many geographical areas. Second, non-traditional security concerns are characterised mainly by political and socioeconomic elements, as opposed to conventional security threats rooted in interstate competition or power relations. Thirdly, serious security dangers are associated with resource shortages and irregular migration, leading to social unrest and political instability. Furthermore, anthropogenic disruptions to the delicate ecological equilibrium often serve as the primary catalyst for climate change, which has severe consequences for nations and society and is sometimes hard to rectify. Security today prioritises the survival, well-being, and dignity of individuals and society rather than only focusing on state sovereignty or territorial integrity.

In the Global South, problems with water go beyond direct effects on people's health and means of subsistence; they also involve more extensive non-traditional security risks. First, a lack of water affects agricultural output, which exacerbates food poverty and leads to disputes over finite resources. Second, there are serious hazards to the public's health since polluted water sources fuel the spread of illnesses transmitted through the water. Thirdly, the lack of water and associated problems can cause large-scale migration and relocation, fueling societal unrest and disputes over scarce resources. Finally, rivalry over water resources can exacerbate already-existing political tensions and fuel instability in the area, endangering peace and security.

A comprehensive approach is required to address non-traditional security challenges associated with water in the Global South. First and foremost, integrated water management is essential. Comprehensive methods considering social, environmental, and economic factors must be implemented to achieve sustainable resource utilisation. Second,

infrastructure development is essential to improve access to clean water and reduce pollution. Investments in this area are made in wastewater treatment plants and effective irrigation systems. Thirdly, developing capacity is crucial. It aims to support local institutions' and communities' ability to efficiently manage water resources, promoting resilience over the long run. Fourth, promoting cross-sectoral collaboration between the public and corporate sectors and civil society organisations is imperative to address water-related issues holistically. Finally, it is critical to give climate adaptation measures top priority. Examples of such steps include developing water collection strategies and encouraging crops resistant to drought to adjust to shifting weather patterns.

Transboundary water conflicts can also stoke intra-state violence; some observers have noted a rise in this, especially in hotspots where worries of cross-border conflict are high. A new hydroelectric project, for instance, can help the wealthy while doing nothing to enhance the lives of the populations that depend on those resources. Furthermore, water stress might impact international trade and population movements. In 2010, wildfires and drought in Russia led to the destruction of harvests, resulting in a significant increase in commodity prices and triggering food riots in Egypt and Tunisia during the beginning of the Arab upheavals. Specific individuals are compelled to migrate beyond national boundaries because of environmental adversity. UN projections indicate that failure to address climate change will result in water scarcity in arid and semi-arid regions, displacing hundreds of thousands of individuals.

Hydro-diplomacy in South Asia

Hydro-diplomacy is currently at an early stage of development in South Asia. The focus is primarily on data exchange and limited state-to-state interactions, disregarding several natural approaches to understanding water management and diplomacy. This paper emphasises the importance of multi-track diplomacy in addressing diverse interests and decision-making processes. A new idea and practical strategy called hydro-diplomacy, often known as water diplomacy, is based on discussions that gained traction after the Cold War's conclusion about environmental security, conflict, collaboration, and the necessity of peacebuilding (Farnum, 2018). To foster connections and (re)build confidence between sovereign governments and assist in preventing future water problems, the method of hydro-diplomacy allows communication. According to Keskinen et al. (2021), discussions on the distribution of water resources take place at several stages of water management. They argue that hydro-diplomacy has the potential to be applicable at all these stages.

Given that discussions on the distribution of water resources take place at several levels, as Keskinen et al. (2021) pointed out, hydro-diplomacy is potentially applicable to all levels of water management. Nevertheless, the

policy instruments now at hand for hydro-diplomacy mainly focus on interactions between different states (Van Genderen & Rood, 2011). However, due to the limited number of nations, which is just a few hundred, states play a relatively insignificant role among the prominent participants in the contemporary concept of diplomacy. However, millions of individuals and hundreds of businesses rely on water. This expertise needs to be improved in the discourse on hydro-diplomacy, both in general and specifically in the context of South Asia. Home to 40 per cent of the global population, South Asia is characterised by enduring poverty, slow progress in modernisation, rapid population growth, and environmental degradation.

Due to their riparian origins in Tibet, the Indus, a central river system in South Asia, is crucial for livelihoods in six of the eight countries relying on it, including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. China is an upper riparian country, as these three river systems have their source in Tibet's Himalayan Mountain ranges. Policies and underlying frameworks that are fiercely securitised, technocratic, and more nationalistic hurt South Asia's transboundary water issue (The Asia Foundation, 2014). Freshwater availability varies significantly between the nations, placing further strain on the existing resources and hastening the competition for the transboundary rivers' waters (Nepal & Shrestha, 2015).

India and Pakistan are facing an increasing issue of water scarcity, while Bhutan and Nepal need help with inadequate governance of water resources. Conversely, Bangladesh faces the challenge of managing water flow as a significant portion of its surface water originates from external sources (Khalid et al., 2014; Shan et al., 2020). Various state governments endeavour to compound further the issue of constructing hydroelectric infrastructure to provide power and water stability (Salman & Uprety, 2018). Due to the absence of collaborative planning, finance, or management, many downstream riparians perceive these developmental plans as threats, as they are often made unilaterally without considering their input (Vij et al., 2020a). This creates uncertainty rife with real and imagined threats (Salman & Uprety, 2018). South Asian riparians have negotiated several institutional arrangements (treaties/agreements) to enhance transboundary water cooperation (Barua, 2018).

Pakistan, India and Nepal are the central riparian states in this context. However, these governments have yet to enter bilateral treaties with any parties involved, such as the Gandaki, Kosi, and Mahakali between India and Nepal. Despite having a significant Indus tributary, Pakistan does not have a treaty with Afghanistan. The interpretation and execution of the limited treaties and agreements that have been reached so far present serious difficulties. For example, after extensive discussions, the Mahakali Treaty was stalled because of vested political interests (Gyawali & Dixit,

1999). Barua highlights the need for more innovative and cooperative institutions like the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission and the Indus Commission to regulate transboundary rivers. Departments unique to each state diligently gather and retain data on transboundary rivers, even in the rare instances of data-sharing agreements. Despite the existence of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two nations, China refrained from providing India with hydrological data on the flow of Brahmaputra water for a year following the Doklam stalemate in 2017. The hydro-diplomacy in South Asia is characterised by a very formal and state-driven approach, which has led to a significant lack of trust between governments and a stalemate in debates (Barua & Vij, 2018; Mirumachi, 2020). The inclination of water diplomacy to favour natural scientists over social scientists diminishes stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes.

Discussion

Technocratic considerations dominate state policy in South Asia, with little regard for environmental health, community integrity, or the impoverished' access to clean water. Numerous entities have initiated cooperative initiatives and bilateral and international discussions to sway the outcomes of Track I diplomacy. It is also recommended that states in the basin create alliances to concentrate on shared goals, such as hydropower production, and problems, such as flood control. These alliances might eventually lead to multilateral cooperation throughout the basin (Viswanath, 2018; Saklani et al., 2020).

Swain and Karim assert that the UN and World Bank actively advocate for benefit-sharing agreements among stakeholders, highlighting the importance of adaptive governance in South Asian nations. However, because these strategies are frequently motivated by short-term financing cycles and state presidents generally have little interest in maintaining such cooperative structures, they have only had little success (Uprety & Salman, 2011; Hanasz, 2017). Although the majority view of South Asian states is that transboundary relationships are a zero-sum game, it is important to acknowledge that the language around hydro diplomacy is still poorly defined and weak in the region. To redefine and expand its meaning, hydro diplomacy seeks to intensify and elevate the discourse surrounding it in South Asia. The paper highlights the significance of multi-track diplomacy, international water law concepts, and efficient science-media communication to handle the multiplicity of transboundary waterways in South Asia.

Water cooperation has experienced significant results in South Asia, as demonstrated by treaties such as the Indus Water Treaty amongst old rivals. Moreover, the agreements between Bangladesh and Nepal and India and Nepal have shown occasional achievements in managing water resources

in the region. However, we must build on these successes. Minimal but effective initiatives can make a big difference in the region's progress towards water cooperation. Establishing a Regional Working Group of Ministers on Water might significantly boost debates and decision-making processes related to the utilisation and distribution of water. This panel, backed by high-ranking government officials and outside experts, would meet once a year to discuss disparities in thinking and strategy, especially about equitable allocation of limited water resources among the local population. Second, worries about the openness of water data would be eased by establishing a Regional Database on Water Flow and Availability. Governments now frequently cite worries about national security as justification for limiting access to water flow data. A public database that is open and available to all residents would encourage a feeling of urgency in tackling water-related challenges as a group.

Furthermore, this method would encourage deliberation on the impacts of climate change and collaboration in devising solutions that encompass public engagement and policy formulation. Fourthly, encouraging joint watershed management through a regional water management centre may make collaborative research and discussion more accessible. A structure like this would open the door to efficient group agendas and processes for managing shared water resources.

Conclusion

Finally, using a Regional Group on Water Pollution to tackle water pollution is critical. Water resources in the region are seriously threatened by pollution, which impacts both rural and urban areas. The Global South faces serious obstacles from non-traditional security risks relating to water, which put regional stability, socioeconomic growth, and human security at risk. Stakeholders in the Global South may strive to provide a more resilient and sustainable future for communities with water-related issues by implementing integrated methods and promoting cooperation. Collaboration is necessary for nearly all actions connected to water. Collaboration among farmers is essential for using irrigation systems in agricultural cultivation. Providing affordable and clean water to urban and rural areas can only be achieved via the collaborative management of water supply and sanitation systems. In addition, food security and farmer incomes guarantee relies on the partnership between urban and rural people. The management of transboundary aquifers and rivers introduces intricacy. Out of the 468 aquifers that are shared globally, only six have a formal cooperative agreement. Even though collaborating on transboundary basins and aquifers has been shown to offer several benefits beyond water security, such as creating new diplomatic opportunities.

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