Water Resource Conflicts: a theoretical perspective

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Water Resource Conflicts

- **Water conflict** is a term describing a conflict between countries, states, or groups over an access to water resources.

- The United Nations recognizes that water disputes result from opposing interests of water users, public or private.

- Competing demands on the same resources by different people result in protracted conflicts, sometimes violent

Factors Leading to Evolution of Water Conflicts

- **Physical & Technological**

    - rainfall, soil texture, nature & extent of g/w aquifers and overall hydrological cycle

    - technological factors either constrain or facilitate the use of resources

- **Attributes of community -**

    - Individual/community actions to meet need/ interests

- **Institutional factors -**

    - interaction with physical and socio-cultural world

Competition and Conflicts in Different Water Users

Different forms of localized surface water conflicts

- Upstream v/s Downstream

- Agriculture v/s Domestic

- Urban v/s Rural allocations

- Industrial pollution v/s community

Behind the water crisis lies a very apparent human hand!

Mis-management of water resources is leading to increasing inter-state/region conflicts over water resources

Scenario of water crisis leading to water conflict results from factors that operate for a long time with various actors involved including Government

Conflict Analysis: Mapping

Strengths	Limitations
Temporal Mapping · Provides accurate record of who did what-when	· Often based on recall data and subject to errors · Does not cover spatial dimension of conflict
Spatial Mapping · May provide some clues about the impact of events on different stakeholders on account of spatial dimensions – eg. Proximity of resources, etc.	· Spatial dimension also changes over time which can't be captured in a single diagram
Historical Mapping · Overcomes the limitation of both the above methods · Can have series of maps at different points in the time showing spatial changes.	· Conflicts often escalate at higher levels and are fought in arenas far removed from the original battlegrounds
Mapping of Levels and Arenas Provides information about changes in positions, strategies and key actors as conflict moves to higher levels and into different arenas.	· Such map fail to provide information of spatial dimension. · Should be used in conjugation with Spatial or Historical mapping

Alternate Approaches to Conflict Analysis

Strengths	Limitations
Stakeholder Analysis • Focus on different groups and their interests can lead to negotiated solutions	· Not very effective when conflicts escalates to higher levels when new actors get involved in different arenas where rules of games are different
Actor-Oriented Analysis · Focus on mapping of events across roles of different actors · Useful for generating understanding of process at different levels and arenas	· Usually good for understanding of conflict but not very helpful in conflict resolution
Root Cause Analysis · Focus on proper diagonosis of problem likely to yield effective results	· Root cause may be perceived differently by different stakeholder groups
Policy Instrument Analysis · Focus on policy flaws and implementation problems leading to conflicts.	· Not relevant for non-policy induced conflicts.

Source: Pastakia, A. R., Conflict Analysis: A review of tools and methods (1999)

Conflict Management

- **Conflicts do not take place in isolation.** It has context, partisan interest and positions.

- Strong relationship between: culture, communication – verbal/ non verbal and conflict!

- Conflict resolution – proactive process – arbitration requires – careful planning and preparation

Conflict Management in Water Resources:

- It would require application of different methical approaches to the development process