

# Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and Water Crisis

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**Abstract:-** The West Bank is one of the world's most water-stressed regions. The distribution of water evoked conflicts between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank. Water is an essential resource for humans to survive. Climate change has impacted the water supply in the West Bank and caused scarce water resources. This article will discuss the existing problems of how people addressed water issues and the consequences that impacted political stability and social development. This article provides multiple analyses of different theories and gives ideas on how to resolve long-standing natural resource issues. Also, this paper explores the power dynamics about how Israeli policies influence people who live in the West Bank, discusses the conflicts over water supply distribution, and discovers the issue of inequality of water consumption. It demonstrates the importance of protecting people's water rights and water utilization. Furthermore, water rights and water security are essential to strengthen human rights. This paper aims to help Palestinians and Israeli settlers to find common ground on sharing water resources, analyzes the causes of the water issue, and presents ideas about how to improve foreign and domestic policies, as well as enhancing international relations and rising global equality.

**Keywords:-** Realism theory, green theory, human needs theory, Israel, the West Bank.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Realism was described as the dominant theoretical perspective in the international relations theory discipline (Folker, 2006). It indicates that power has dynamics and generates uncertainties. Structural realism seeks to explain global political outcomes, and it is helpful in understanding the capacity of administrations in responding to water rights. A weak state is more likely to be the target of a more significant power state. A weak state is unlikely to have the capability to adapt to the changing of global and technological changes. Its domestic, political, and economic systems might be established or impacted by outsiders (Folker, 2006).

### ➤ *Water Inequality and Understanding Realism Theory*

Common aquifers link Israel and the West Bank Authorities. Distribution of water in the West Bank instigated conflicts between the Israelis and Palestinians since 1967 (Rouyer, 2000). Israel controls the most substantial part of the water in the West Bank. Israel developed its water company, Mekorot, to distribute water, particularly for the Mountain Aquifer. Additionally, Israelis and Palestinians in West Bank rely on the Jordan River basin, and one of them extends from the mountainous central spine of the West Bank into Israel (Rouyer, 2000).

### • *Israeli Perspectives*

People pursue goals like prosperity and protecting human rights, but those aims must always take a back seat to survival because if a state does not survive, it cannot pursue those other goals (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). Having control over another state's geographical location is a strategy to gain power. Israel and the West Bank have shared border and water resources on the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. Israelis controlled the upper Jordan River, which gives Israel a geographical advantage. According to offensive realism, inequitable bargaining outcomes might be politically unacceptable if countries are not willing to share water resources equally (Feitelson & Haddad, 2000). The best issue that a state can hope for is to be a regional hegemon, which means dominating one's geographical area (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). Offensive realists like Mearsheimer (2006) believes that states can gain as much power as possible to pursue hegemony (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith). By maximizing their share of world power to include seeking hegemony, a nation tends to intensify security competition with its neighbors (James, 2002). Israeli water policies allow them to invest economically in water facilities in the West Bank with the bill paid by the Palestinians for limited amounts of water. However, Jewish settlers in the West Bank pay lower prices compared to the Palestinians. Israel has the power to set water prices after consulting with the Water Commission and getting authorization by the Fiscal Committees of the Knesset. The cost of water charged by Mekorot in the West Bank, according to the Civil Administration, represents but ignores Palestinian interests (Rouyer, 2000). Also, compared to Palestinians, Israel has more military and economic power, and they can gain international, individuals, and organizational support from the Israelis and other countries to strengthen Israeli's international political position.

Powers possess offensive military capabilities, which can be used against other states (Rouyer, 2000). Israeli settlers did not want to lose control over vital natural resources. Israeli water and government officials argued that they have "prior use" rights to the West Bank aquifers. Israel ensures that their water rights cannot be threatened (Selby, 2003). The dominant ideas of Zionism as a political ideology were to establish a Jewish national homeland and to encourage Jewish people to find their roots and return to their home after years of escape from their original land Canaan (Bengali, 2003). Israel might fear Arab threats to the Jewish population and worry about the dangers involving other Arabic countries (Folker, 2006). The Israeli government claims that Palestinians cannot manage the water resources, and they believe building advanced technology for cycling the water already helped water management and distribution from the Jordan River for both Israeli settlers and Palestinians. Israelis also argue that they have a prior claim to the water of the mountain aquifer, which originates almost

within the political boundaries of the West Bank. The water from the basin of the aquifer flows naturally into their land (Rouyer, 2000). They believe that the restrictions imposed on Palestinians are for protecting the water from overexploitation.

- *Palestinian Perspectives*

Palestinians in the West Bank were facing challenges in managing the water resource system. They were lacking financial support and have technical limitations in developing groundwater resources. Geographic factors such as contiguity further heighten the fears of expansion (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). A country giving pressure to another is a potential regional hegemon. Power is generated by national security competition among different groups with various cultures and religious backgrounds. The balance of power is about how to gain control over other nations and to make sure they do not lose power. This competition for power makes for a dangerous world where states sometimes fight each other (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). Palestinians believed that Israel had recognized them before finding more advanced negotiations for developing new plans (Rouyer, 2000). Israel helped the settlers in West Bank, and they have behaved more aggressively by increasing the regional hegemony.

The influence of religion on Realism and the power of Realism can address religious issues. Religious factors can be a source of legitimacy and impact decision-makers (Troy, 2013). Realism indicates that any supreme arbiter enforced moral behavior and agreed on international codes to pursue political power to attain their vital interests (Troy, 2013). The Palestinian population in the West Bank was growing fast, and it required more water to come into the West Bank. Palestinians claimed that the Israelis consume water at a rate four times greater than Palestinians in the West Bank. Evidence shows that more than 80% of the water from the West Bank goes to Israeli settlers. Palestinians have only 18% access to the water in the West Bank (Rouyer, 2000). Palestinians complained that the Israeli government settled the advanced pumping equipment to help Jewish settlers acquire ten times more water than the Palestinians. Furthermore, Palestinian water experts claimed that Palestinians have “absolute sovereignty over all Eastern Aquifer resources, it is completely located near the West Bank” (Rouyer, 2000). Palestinians believed that Israelis should only have limited access to water (Selby, 2003). Water scarcity can result in political dilemmas.

Defensive Realism indicates that defensive strategies are often the best route to security (Dunne, Kuriki, & Smith, 2016). People seek to politicize water distribution and shape rules regarding decision-making processes. Each party has to either protect their security or empower their international influence on its neighbors. National interests will be considered in understanding for international foreign policies. Compared to the Palestinians, Israel has more bargaining power to control the rules of managing water resources. The government did not adequately provide legal security to the Jordan River users. States might only consider their interests instead of others.

Power maximization could help a state gain more benefits, and it is the best way to ensure states’ survival so that a state uses its power to increase its national security, causing a security threat to its neighbor states (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). Countries need to consider how to balance power and conquer geographic barriers to solve water problems. Moreover, reconciliation processes seek to increase the legitimacy of making win-win agreements.

- *Green Theory*

Water is essential to the security of people’s livelihood. The increased demands of water for domestic use rise because of population growth. People possess environmental rights and must protect their future generations from facing the issue of climate change. Climate change will bring less rain but more powerful storms and much more flooding (Selby, 2003). Researchers have shown that both Israel and the West Bank have seen a reduction in rainfall by around 40% - 60% in the last 40 years. The region usually experiences drought in the summer and rain is limited during the winter (Selby, 2003). The Green theory explains climate change problems, reveals economic competition, and helps us understand the importance of long-term ecological values and interests, such as investment in technology and national cooperation (Barry, 2015).

Wisely managing natural resources can help people gain social justice and achieve equity as well as maintain local cultures to help ethics grow. The usage of water resources should be guided by ethical principles when considering the Israeli-Palestinian water crisis and conflict. Both Israelis and Palestinians rely on the Jordan River basin, including Lake Galilee. Environmental degradation caused by human activity has a long and complicated history (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). Understanding the Green Theory helps in analyzing social struggle over issues, such as authority, territory, and natural resources. It also gives ideas on emphasizing social justice and respect for different cultures. The West Bank is in the Mediterranean climatic zone and has experienced significant climatic change over decades. Climate change will also exacerbate existing inequalities in access to necessities such as healthcare, adequate food, and clean water (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). Both governments need to understand how to build communities and minimize damage to water users. International laws and regulations should be applied to fulfill humanitarian purposes and facilitate open dialogue (Hiskes, 2009). The West Bank and Israel are geopolitically linked together as a unit. Conflicts over global river systems can be resolved by negotiation and agreements.

Political thought and political understanding can impact managing environmental circumstances. The Israeli government has made the points that their water policies do not discriminate between Jewish people and Arabs, but it benefited the Palestinians. Israelis believe that a small number of Jewish people have always continued to live in the land, and they have the right to protect the continued viability of water resources (Rouyer, 2000). Political and environmental concerns are significant when droughts and water scarcity became a threat,

and millions of people might have to leave their homes and move somewhere closer to the water resources. Israel will likely have both the circumstances and the tools to benefit from the opportunities of climate change adaptation. Policy-makers in the West Bank have less political and economic capacity to restrain damage to the environment.

The Green theory has a normative branch concerned with questions of justice, rights, democracy, citizenship, the state, and the environment. It helps in exploring the relationship between environmental justice and environmental democracy (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). However, both Israelis and Palestinians disagree over the water negotiations based on their principles of international law. Environmental injustice arises when unaccountable social agents externalize the ecological costs of their decisions and practices to innocent third parties, particularly vulnerable communities (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). The country should improve regulations, transportation for the water, increase tourism, economic efficiency, and make efforts toward maximizing water supplies.

Rising domestic water consumption will also reduce the water available for agricultural purposes. The West Bank has to increase water supply efficiency, balancing multiple drinks of water uses amid water scarcity, such as limiting heavy industry and encouraging tourism. The water crisis has prevented sick people from getting equal opportunities and services compared to the ones who gain more resources. Diplomatic engagement should be encouraged to create opportunities and initiate negotiation and mediation to erase mistrust and misunderstanding between the Israelis and Palestinians (Staub, 2015). The governments of Israel and the West Bank have to establish legitimate goals and work on managing the environmental issues together to avoid a higher risk of conflict over resources.

## II. HUMAN NEEDS THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The fear of lacking living and health resources would prevent people from well-being. People need love and security, especially children, who need someone to respond their feelings and fulfill their need for protection. Social conflicts have created hostile actions and broken the affection tie between children and their families. People need to gain mutual help and take practical measures to promote altruism and justice.

### A. Need for Water

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs illustrated that people have essential needs, such as the need for water. This theory helps people understand the importance of eliminating poverty and increasing people's livelihood. The government of the West Bank should cooperate with Israel for improving international technology and receiving humanitarian support. People require more water in the West Bank because the population growth in West Bank ranges from 1.58 percent to 3.94 percent per year, which is relatively high, and immigration growth has increased the population (Rouyer, 2000). However, inadequate use of

water has threatened people and over 250 refugee camps in the West Bank. This situation has pressed the need for people to look for new sources and to increase the water quality for both Palestinians and the Jewish people in the West Bank (Feitelson & Haddad, 2000). In the West Bank, people collected rainfall from their rooftops or water tanks because they cannot receive enough piped water, which profoundly impacts the lives of people who have lived in poor conditions, such as children, the elderly and disabled people.

### B. Need for Identity

The needs for identification and having the sense of belonging are significant for people. Prejudice and discrimination towards other people's identities could result in hatred and conflicts. The Palestinians have believed that Israelis invaded their land. However, Israelis insist that they have the right to come back to their area, Israel, because of evidence in their holy books and history. People need to find a way to reduce their suffering and help them out of psychological distress (Staub, 2015). Palestinians' needs might contradict Israelis' demands. People in the region define "themselves" as either Arabic or Jewish people. The desire to overcome others was rooted in them, instead of caring and helping each other rather than finding a way to balance their needs and recognize how to serve another's needs. The Human Need Theory assists in considering others from a different culture and obtaining accurate knowledge to solve problems (Staub, 2015). They need to develop a way to understand each other from their perspectives and value their culture and norms. They should welcome outsiders and be willing to share resources with each other.

### C. Need for Well-being

In Middle Eastern countries, the specific society and families were focused on educating their children to be obedient and follow specific rules and norms. People need love, affection, as well as pursue well-being (Etzioni, 1968, p. 871), and this ensures a community can maintain its sustainable growth. Happiness is one of the important needs of people, if people lack the needs of happiness and welfare, such as meeting their emotional and spiritual needs, this will prevent people from living a healthy life (Park, 2010). Additionally, more effective and capable people feel they could control over their lives, and this will help people gain self-esteem and have greater joy (Staub, 2015). For example, Orthodox religious families in both societies have limited the chance for their children to question their beliefs. It has caused violent actions when they encounter something against their religion but ignores the importance of connection with different societies and cultures, as well as preventing the developing a peaceful process with other religions or nationalities (Staub, 2015). People have different religious beliefs and national background in the West Bank. The government should issue policies based on its population and the poverty line to ensure their people in alleviating their condition of getting enough water. Families should be treated according to moral rules and cultivate positive values against conflicts for social justice.

#### D. Need for Self-Determination

Self-determination is a force of seeking human equality and humanity, including environmental, human rights related to respecting the people's right of self-determination. (Hiskes, 2009). The West Bank is a zone with many civil and armed conflicts with its neighbor country, which can result in interpersonal or intergroup conflicts. If the majority of Palestinians in the West Bank cannot have full access to use the same water supply facilities, it will be hard for them to reach the need for self-development. Environmental, human rights can be promoted by empowering people to use local resources reasonably. Moral encouragement is essential in developing goodness and raise people's critical consciousness in improving human relations and social harmony (Staub, 2015). People who have different norms and social standards that will impact their way of valuing other cultures. People who show compassion and empathy to their neighbor and respect true knowledge will avoid violent interactions, seeking mutually beneficial efforts instead. Israelis and Palestinians may need to build a relationship, create a geographical and water operation system to help the primary water resources connect with other areas in order to have a win-win outcome (Burton, 1979).

### III. CONCLUSION

The growing population increased the usage of water. Distrust between individuals and disorder in society can deter people from entering common interests. This paper discusses the social conflicts, and water crisis management between Palestinians and Jewish settlers in the West Bank by analyzing multiple alternative theory approaches, such as International Relations and Human Needs theories. International Relations Theories are concerned with global justice as well as individuals' benefits. These theories help in exploring how to build the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians. Additionally, the Green Theory helps in explaining environmental issues, managing conflicts, opportunities for developing shared global ecological values, and strengthening human relationships and global justice. The Human Needs Theory helps in finding the root problems of disputes. It encourages decreasing global inequalities and migration crises, as well as emphasizing protecting the integrity of territorial sovereignty. Furthermore, international cooperation is a guarantee for people to be satisfied and it helps carry out human development approaches, which brings hopes for future generations to develop an advanced and harmonious region.

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