

## THE ROLE OF WATER DIPLOMACY AS A CHANGING CONCEPT IN REGIONAL COOPERATION: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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### Abstract

Today, there is a disagreement among the actors since the demand for water resources has gained more momentum. Sharing water resources, regional actors want to have control over water which has a wide range of functions either electricity generation or agricultural activities. Therefore, the willingness of actors to actively use and manage water fuels disagreements at the regional level and hinders cooperation. Herein water diplomacy tools are used to prevent the occurrence of disputes related to water resources or to transform the existing conflict into regional cooperation. Water diplomacy promotes the establishment of trust bonds between actors, as well as constitutes the step of cooperation by encouraging the start of problems between actors through dialogue. In this study, the question of what the role of water diplomacy and tools in is establishing and maintaining the cooperation structure in regional water disputes constitutes the basis to be. At the regional level in the conflict over water resources, the role of water diplomacy in the development and sustainability of cooperation is discussed in this study.

### Keywords

Cooperation, Regional cooperation, Diplomacy, Water, Water Diplomacy

### Resumo

Atualmente, existe um desacordo entre os atores, uma vez que a procura de recursos hídricos ganhou maior relevo. Partilhando os recursos hídricos, os atores regionais querem ter controlo sobre a água, que tem uma vasta gama de funções, quer se trate de produção de eletricidade ou de actividades agrícolas. A vontade dos intervenientes de utilizar e gerir ativamente a água alimenta as divergências a nível regional e dificulta a cooperação. Neste contexto, os instrumentos da diplomacia da água são utilizados para evitar a ocorrência de litígios relacionados com os recursos hídricos ou para transformar o conflito existente em cooperação regional. A diplomacia da água promove o estabelecimento de laços de confiança entre os actores, bem como constitui o passo da cooperação ao encorajar o início de problemas entre os actores através do diálogo. Neste estudo, a questão de saber qual é o papel da diplomacia da água e dos seus instrumentos no estabelecimento e manutenção da estrutura de cooperação nos conflitos regionais sobre a água constitui a base. A nível regional, no conflito sobre os recursos hídricos, o papel da diplomacia da água no desenvolvimento e na sustentabilidade da cooperação é discutido neste estudo..

### Palavras chave

Cooperação, Cooperação regional, Diplomacia, Água, Diplomacia da água.

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## **THE ROLE OF WATER DIPLOMACY AS A CHANGING CONCEPT IN REGIONAL COOPERATION: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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### **Introduction**

According to Earnest B. Haas, regional cooperation has been defined as “the process by which political actors are persuaded to shift their commitment, prospects and political activities to a new larger center owned or demanded by their institutions” (Singh, 2010: 52). This situation takes into the states together on various issues in the region and enables them to act jointly by making collective decisions as well. States especially developing and underdeveloped states tend to cooperate with other states in the region to become independent and stronger in the international arena. As Joseph Nye stated, the cooperation process must be defined by mutual obligations and common interests between states by virtue of a competitive system (Singh, 2010:53).

Although the origin of the concept of regional cooperation in the international arena dates to the end of World War II, it has become a trend with the new wave of regionalism since the mid-1980s. To survive in the competitive environment of the system, actors have tended to establish bonds with their close circles to be stronger and more independent. There is a tendency to establish cooperation structures within the region not only in military and security dimensions but also in many areas such as economic, environmental, and water. Moreover, with the increase in the number of actors with the new wave of regionalism, the cooperation has been carried to a wider dimension. Before 1980, only states were active in the formation of cooperation, but with the new regionalism, non-state actors played an important role in the formation of cooperation mechanisms.

Water diplomacy, on the other hand, is an important way that brings together actors around cooperation in the efficient use and management of resources. Recently, it has been observed that the dependence on water resources has increased even more, both globally and in terms of demographics. For this reason, actors want to hold water resources and have efficiency in their management. This situation causes disagreement and sometimes conflict over water resources. To Arun Elhance, *water is one of the most complicated, urgent, and contentious issues that developing countries and the international community will have to face and resolve in the next century* (Kehl, 2023: 39). At this point, water diplomacy is a mechanism used to deal with the conflict between the actors without getting too deep. It tried to establish a bond of trust between the



parties by using water diplomacy tools. To build trust, consensus is sought by using dialogue and negotiation, and then the sustainability of the cooperation is ensured by bringing the parties together around common mechanisms. The main purpose of water diplomacy is to turn the existing conflict between the parties into cooperation. Therefore, water diplomacy has a supporting role in the existence and continuation of cooperation within the region by bringing together the actors under these mechanisms.

Countries benefit greatly from cooperation when they share common resources such as rivers, fisheries, hydroelectric power, rail links, or the environment. For example, Egypt and Sudan, which are riparians of the Nile, made a bilateral agreement in 1959 and blocked the production of more irrigation water or hydroelectric energy because they did not include the states in the upper basin in the process. On the other hand, although the international community provided financial assistance and helped India and Pakistan to share the waters of the Indus River Basin, the ongoing tension between the two countries prevented the states from developing additional benefits from water (Schiff and Winter, 2002: 1-5). As can be seen in both examples, common resources could not be beneficial due to the partial emphasis of countries on cooperation. If countries can lead to a wide range of cooperation within the region instead of conflict, they can make their interests more sustainable. As Aaron Wolf et al. (2005: 81) has stated "Water is not managed for one purpose: all water management serves multiple purposes and pace between competing interests".

The basis to be questioned within the scope of this study; the aim of this study is to examine the contribution of water diplomacy and mechanism to cooperation in water resources disputes at the regional level. In this context, the extent of the effectiveness of water diplomacy in the formation and maintenance of regional cooperation has been considered as the basis. The desired result in the study is also based on this.

## **Methodology**

Within the framework of this study, it is tried to gain a new perspective on the relationship between water diplomacy and the concept of regional cooperation. Especially with the reports gathered from Web of Science and different databases, it is applied with descriptive method. In the study, which consists of two parts, the scope of regional cooperation and water diplomacy was examined. In this context, it is aimed to facilitate the understanding of regional cooperation and water diplomacy in terms of international relations. In the first chapter, the place, development, and areas of the concept of regional cooperation in international relations have been tried to be discussed. The scope, tools, and activities in establishing regional cooperation regarding the water diplomacy framework are detailed in the second part.

### **1.1.Regional Cooperation Definition**

Today, the interdependence of states in the same region is gradually increasing. Therefore, states generally prefer regional cooperation by virtue of conflicts and problems prevent the maintenance of the interest. Moreover, the concept of cooperation is



becoming widespread as comprehensive regional organizations, sectoral regional organizations, regional networks, and partnership structures increase within the same region. Thence, the concept of regional cooperation turns into a global dimension.

The concept of regional cooperation refers to the establishment of political and institutional systems by organizing the same states through mutual cooperation and dialogue, as well as finding and strengthening the common interests of the states in a certain geographical region. The first step toward regionalism was taken for the European Free Trade Area and for the trade of goods in Latin America and Africa (ESCAP, 2021: 27). Concept started to develop in Europe after World War II. The old regionalism covers the post-World War II period and is a system in which only states are involved. Classical regional cooperation in the 1950s and 1960s is tailored to national interests due to being created and administered by governments. In addition, because of exists in a bipolar area, the regional cooperation created was also established within the framework of this logic (Singh, 2010: 51).

The concept of regionalism gained a new dimension after the 1980s. The new concept of regionalism is not limited to formal interstate regional initiatives and organizations only. With the involvement as well state, non-state actors in cooperation at the regional level, the concept has taken the form of a wide spectrum in terms of actors. Therefore, multiple state and non-state actors take action in both formal and informal networks operating at different levels of the international system (Singh, 2010: 51). As shown in Table 1, there are some differences between the old regionalism and the new regionalism. One of these differences is that the new regionalism has a structure that includes a multi-level management system together with globalization, according to the old concept of regionalism.

Table 1 - Old Regionalism and New Regionalism

<b>Old Regionalism</b>	<b>New Regionalism</b>
Influenced by the logic of the Cold War, often imposed from outside by superpowers	Influenced by the logic of the Cold War, developing in regions
Introverted and protective	Extrovert, linked to globalization
Specific and narrow objectives (predominantly trade and security)	Comprehensive and multidimensional objectives (economics, politics, security, culture)
Not open to all for membership	Inclusive and open membership
European phenomenon, modeled on European communities	A worldwide and heterogeneous phenomenon
State centered and state sovereignty, especially within regional intergovernmental organizations	Involving state, <u>market</u> and civil society actors in many institutional ways

Source: Hettne ve Söderbaum, 2006: 183



The second difference is that while the old regionalism was a one-dimensional structure (covering only trade and security issues), the new regionalism has a multidimensional structure (including economics, policy, security, culture, and environment). For this reason, meanwhile, the European Union (EU) was considered the most important and effective structure in the old regionalism period, the expansion of the concept of cooperation in the new regionalism period paved the way for the emergence of new structures such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the South American Countries Common Market (MERCOSUR). The last differences are that whereas the old regionalism focuses on state-centered and regional-level problems, the new regionalism, on the other hand, focuses not only on regional problems but also on solving global problems and includes both state and non-state actors in this process (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2006: 181-182).

Especially for developing countries, regional cooperation is used as a tool. These countries alone lack marketing power in the international system in terms of their agricultural products or energy resources. In addition, they tend to cooperate more within the region due to could not hold the power in their hands to resolve both regional and international problems (Rahman, 2012: 5). The main purpose of regional cooperation is to solve the problems between the states of the same region in mutual trust and understanding and to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development (Martin and Sohail, 2005: 43). It is aimed to increase the mutual dependence of state within the region. With increasing interdependence, the state tries to solve it by communicating before the problems that arise in the region for their interest turn into conflicts (Khan and Haider, 2004: 1-5).

### **1.2.Regional Cooperation Methods**

Regional cooperation in more than one field emerges due to geographically formed according to the common needs and problems of each region. The established cooperation structure generally emerges in areas where it is considered important for the sovereignty and national interests of the regional states. For this reason, there are many types of cooperation in many different fields today. In this section, regional economic cooperation, regional security cooperation, regional environmental cooperation, and finally regional water cooperation types are mentioned as they are related to the study.

*Regional economic cooperation* directs some states in the region to increase their cooperation activities on issues such as mutual trade agreements, trade tariffs, technology, investment, joint ventures, customs agreements, and monetary policies. While establishing the economic cooperation mechanism between the states, should be established in a way that will provide mutual equality and benefit between the member states (Asian Development Bank, 2013: 4). *The regional security cooperation* mechanism aims to reduce the tension and conflicts, and this situation helps to eliminate the problem of miscommunication between member states and at the same time helps to easily establish common interests and goals (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2014: 181). NATO and ASEAN exemplify this model. The security community, which is the latest model, is a state community where members of the community will not fight each other physically



and based on a solution without physical conflict in case of conflict (Bailes and Cottey, 2006: 200-201). *Regional cooperation on the environment* takes different forms from region to region and varies depending on the degree of political cohesion in a region, the available energy resources, the strength of the economic ties between the participating countries, their institutional and technical capacities, their political will, and available financial resources (Moreno et al., 2014: 1086). Unexpected natural disasters occur, access to clean water resources is decreasing and at the same time, the amount of product obtained from agriculture is decreasing. For this reason, states implement policies to reduce these problems that cause climate change and constitute a potential platform (Balgiser et al., 2012: 5-6).

Today, water is seen as a source of both conflict and cooperation due to its effects in many areas such as hydrological, economic, domestic, and foreign policy, agriculture, and energy. Therefore, obtaining and using water resources is of vital importance for states, and for this reason, some conflicts arise both within the state and between states when it comes to the management and sharing of water between states. The intensity of disputes may increase depending on the number or function of water resources in the region.

Water disputes between states can occur for many reasons. One of the reasons occurs when the riparian states feel constrained by other riparian states in achieving their national interests and goals from the use of water resources. The second reason is the existence of riparian countries with competing and incompatible demands on the sharing and cooperation of water resources. A third reason occurs when water resources or water systems are used by a nation, state, or non-state actor for a political purpose, and this prevents cooperation between riparian states. The fourth state is that conflict occurs when the inability of riparian states to use water resources equally or because of the political, military, and economically powerful states wanting to benefit more from water resources (Chen and Trias, 2020). The fifth reason is related to the outbreak of military conflict in the process of recapturing these resources by the states due to the control of the water resources by terrorist organizations. The last reason is that conflict may escalate by virtue of a result of the use of water resources as leverage by a country during the conflict between riparian states (Phillips et al., 2006: 19-20).

The intensity of conflicts over water resources or systems may vary from state to state or between states. The intensity of conflict over water resources is shaped by the attitude and behavior of the contracting countries. For this reason, while some disagreements may remain in discourse, others may tend to escalate into conflict as they cannot turn into cooperation (Petersen-Perlman et al., 2017:2).

As seen in Table 2, the intensity of conflict over water resources or systems varies. Some conflicts do not turn into military conflicts by virtue of being approached moderately by actors. But, in some cases, the situation may go the opposite way. In this situation, it usually continues until one side gains more power and so no attempt is made to establish a cooperation structure. Therefore, the intensity of cooperation and conflict regarding water resources differs in each region and in this context, different effects occur regionally.



Table 2 - Conflict Intensity Scale

	Scale	Example of Event
Conflict ↑	-7	Formal declaration of war.
	-6	Extensive war-like acts causing deaths, dislocation or high strategic costs.
	-5	Small-scale military hostilities.
	-4	Political-military hostile actions.
	-3	Diplomatic-economic hostile actions.
	-2	Strong verbal expressions displaying hostility in interaction,
	-1	Mild verbal expressions displaying discord in interaction.
↓ Cooperation	0	Neutral or non-significant acts for the inter-nation situation.
	1	Minor official exchanges, talks or policy expressions; mild verbal support.
	2	Official verbal support of goals, values, or regime.
	3	Officially sanctioned cultural or scientific support (non-strategic).
	4	Non-military economic, technological or industrial agreements.
	5	Military, economic or strategic support.
	6	Major strategic alliances (e.g. an International Agreement).
	7	Voluntary unification into one nation.

Source: Philips et.al. 2006: 17

Generally, non-state actors such as international organizations, international law, and regional organizations can also play an active role in the formation of cooperation in disputes over water resources or systems. In addition, modern international water law proceeds with the principle that riparian states have an equal right to receive an equal share in the waters and to develop their existing resources to promote regional peace and security and promote fundamental freedoms for all (McMahon, 2017: 32).

From the past to the present, it has been observed that there have been conflicts about water resources in many regions. Disputes arise over water resources for many reasons which are the development levels of each region (Kehl, 2023: 59). Therefore, the way and stage of creating a cooperation structure may also vary by virtue of the problems vary (Peterse-Perlman et al., 2017:1). It should also be noted that not every cooperation attempt can result in a positive outcome. Some problems may remain unresolved. The reason for the emergence of the disagreements, the process after the disagreements, and the examples of the mentioned disagreements are given in.

As shown in Table 3, many case studies have occurred. Water resources create conflict in different situations in each and this conflict occurs within the state or between riparian states. When water was used as a political tool between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq in the 1990s, in 1958 it is seen that there was a disagreement between Egypt and Sudan due to the aim of having more say over water resources. At the same time, when looking at



the impact of the conflict, the results vary in each. As can be seen, the intensity of the disagreements can differ between states and have different effects.

Table 3 - Classification Criteria for Conflicts Over Water

<b>Base of Conflict</b>	<b>Suggested Criteria</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Development Disputes</b> Where water resources or water systems are a source of contention and dispute in the context of economic and social development.	Conflicting interests are neither fought over militarily, nor resolved peacefully.	Ethiopia-Somalia 1963; Bangladesh 1999; Pakistan 2001; Turkey-Syria-Iraq 1990
<b>Control of Water Resources</b> Where water supplies or access to water are not the root of the tensions.	A changed outcome in physical or effective control of the resources following the end of the conflict.	Egypt-Sudan 1958; Israel-Syria 1958; Brazil-Paraguay 1979
<b>Water as a Political Tool</b> Where water resources, or water systems themselves, are used by a nation, State, or non-State actor for a political goal.	Coercion- the use of an advantageous hydraulic (or security) position to advance interests in non-water domains.	Iraq-Syria 1974; Turkey-Syria-Iraq 1990; Malaysia-Singapore 1997
<b>Water as a Military Target</b> Where water resources or systems are targets of military actions by nations or States.	The deliberate destruction of wells, reservoirs, treatment, or distribution facilities.	Israel-Syria 1967; Israel-Jordan 1969; South Africa-Angola 1988;
<b>Water as a Military Tool</b>	The use of flooding, moats, poisoning.	Ethiopia-Somalia 1948; Israel-Lebanon 1982

Source: Philips et.al., 2006: 18-19

## 2. Over Water Diplomacy

One of the scarce resources, water is essential to sustaining all aspects of society from culture to economy. Therefore, it is not a question of managing water for only one purpose; water management is multidimensional and essential to sustaining interests. In addition, surface and ground waters that cross international borders pose challenges to regional stability. Because hydrological needs are usually shaped by political considerations (Wolf, 2006: 3).

The recent climate change, the increase in environmental problems, the growth of economics, the increasing population, and the increasing water insecurity caused by unsustainable consumption habits are increasing the pressures on the common water



resources in the world (Michel et al., 2019). It is also claimed that the pressure on water resources will continue to increase soon. Because global population estimates predict that the world will reach 9.7 billion people by increasing 2.2 billion by 2050 (Klimes et al., 2019) and this means that the need for water will increase in the future. In addition, factors such as pollution and drought caused by climate change cause a decrease or unused water resources. Therefore, it prevents adequate access to water resources and creates disagreement among actors regarding the use and management of water resources. In this regard, water diplomacy helps to resolve the conflict between the actors by using diplomacy techniques. Water diplomacy, which is an important type of diplomacy in resolving disputes over water resources discussed in detail in this section.

### **2.1. What is Water Diplomacy?**

Diplomacy is the structure that carries out the process of dialogue that is non-confrontational or necessary for the parties to manage conflicts positively (Hefny, 2011: 18). It has an important role in the dialogue process apart from official diplomats, as well as the ability of civil society, academia, or non-state actors to connect and build trust between the parties (Huntjenc and Man, 2007: 3). Water diplomacy is a process to eliminate the conflict situation by encouraging states to participate in a diplomatic process in disputes related to water resources (Scheimer, 2017-2018: 2). It also aims to introduce reasonable, sustainable, and peaceful methods in water management by creating or promoting collaboration among riverside stakeholders. Stated in other words, water diplomacy is an approach that contributes to the ways various stakeholders find solutions for the management of common freshwater resources (Michel et al., 2019).

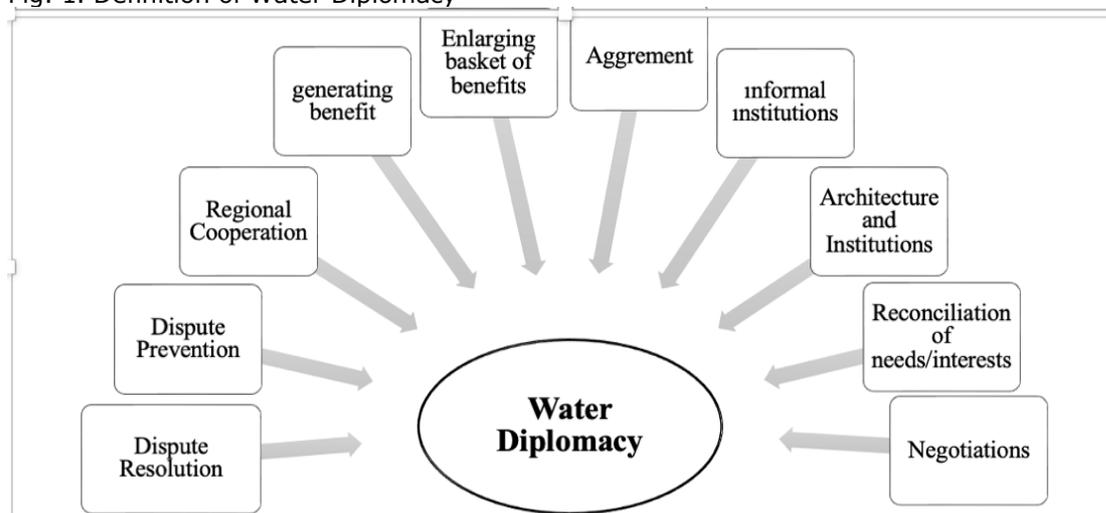
Generally, although water dispute or conflict is caused by access to water between countries or groups, in some cases water can be used as a threatening element in disputes in areas such as politics or economy (Huntjenc and Man, 2017: 4). In this case, it can create a disagreement between the actors over water resources. In addition, water diplomacy uses different diplomacy techniques for each water source because the causes of disputes over water resources vary from one region to another. Methods also may vary due to vary for many reasons related to water resources management. The purpose of water diplomacy is to encourage cooperation between actors without increasing the intensity of conflict and to help create an environment of permanent stability and peace in the region (Pohl et al., 2014: 14).

Water diplomacy uses several diplomacy techniques to resolve disputes between actors regarding water resources. The techniques used are shown in Figure 1. Not all diplomacy techniques in the figure can be applied in disputes related to water resources. Techniques are selected by the nature of the conflict and the region.

Negotiations usually take place between states or groups and in these negotiations, needs or interests are tried to be reconciled. In these negotiations, the parties involved in the conflict are included in thinking about a problem, and different perspectives are tried to be understood (Murthy and Mendikulova, 2017: 416).



Fig. 1. Definition of Water Diplomacy



Source: Schmeier, 2017-2018: 3

The parties are encouraged to take a decision, even if the negotiations are controversial. In this way, different perspectives are brought together during the negotiation, and it is aimed to produce a general solution. In addition, it is not only state institutions that are used to reach an agreement between the parties. At the same time, assistance is also received from non-state actors (De Stefano et al., 2017: 36-37). The aim here is to consider the benefits for each actor, to contribute to the national interests of the parties, and most importantly to prevent the conflict in the long term to maintain regional cooperation. These purposes constitute the basic structure of water diplomacy in general and different processes and methods are applied in each freshwater resource dispute.

There are some challenges faced by water diplomacy in water disputes or conflicts. The first of these is the difficulty encountered in establishing a relationship of trust between rival parties. In such cases, water diplomacy aims to communicate through negotiations, dialogues, or informal talks before establishing a cooperative structure between riparian states. Being able to organize multi-sector and multi-level interactions is the second challenge (Huntjens and Man, 2017: 5). Water; by virtue of its effects on food, energy, and the environment, disputes require the participation of parties from more than one sector and these situations give rise to different views. The other is the challenge of the ability to manage a growing multi-actor policy environment (Kehl, 2023: 55). In water disputes, alongside state-affiliated institutions in water disputes, many participants such as the media, academics, and society can be involved in the problems. The ability to deal with uncertainty is a fourth challenge area and emerges due to many reasons such as the unpredictability of developments, insufficient information, and the existence of conflicting opinions about reasonable solutions. The fifth challenge concerns sustainable finance. Financial support is required to create a suitable environment for cooperation on water resources, to develop water capacity, and to participate in the participation of the parties. Sustainability is another type of challenge. It is tried to create a permanent



peaceful environment between the parties to resolve the conflicts and prevent their reoccurrence (Huntjens and Man, 2017: 6-10).

## **2.2. Water Diplomacy Processes**

Water diplomacy processes start with water disputes. Water disputes between states or groups are the initial stage. At this stage, one or more of the tools of negotiation, diplomatic pressure, mediation, arbitration, and friendly initiative (goodwill) are used according to the intensity of the attitudes and behaviors of the parties (Molnar et al., 2017: 21). The aim here is to direct the parties to the solution (second stage) in the water dispute. At this stage, efforts are made to ensure that the parties trust each other and create a common structure.

After trust is built between the parties, it is tried to prevent the water dispute from turning into a conflict permanently. Making use of international water agreements is aimed to direct the parties to the peace process by encouraging the establishment of a river basin organization or a regional agreement. By establishing many cooperation mechanisms between the parties in the conflict, the ground is created for them to cooperate with each other on water resources. Finally, by creating joint planning mechanisms, joint monitoring, and notification of planned measures (in short, joint water management), efforts are being made effort a structure where the parties can manage water resources mutually (Grench-Madin et al., 2018: 100). With the water resources management mechanism, each party can closely monitor water resources. In this way, it is desired to foresee and eliminate the conflicts in advance or to prevent them from reoccurring later (Schemier, 2017-2018: 4-5).

## **2.3. Multi-Stakeholder Platform/Dialogue in Water Diplomacy**

Water diplomacy is seen as a high-level interaction and dialogue between nation-states and is defined according to various types because of varies in terms of the actors involved and its purpose (Michel et al., 2019). In addition, multi-stakeholder platforms/dialogues provide democratic governance that can help further exploration and evaluation of future options and more open negotiation of viable strategies and agreements (Dore, 2007: 197). Multi-stakeholder platform in water diplomacy's form is divided as 1. Road Diplomacy, 1.5. Road Diplomacy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Road Diplomacy, and finally 3<sup>rd</sup> Road Diplomacy (Barua, 2018: 62).

One of the multi-stakeholder platform/dialogue types in Path 1 Diplomacy (official/traditional diplomacy). They are dialogues with a country-centered perspective, mostly between politicians and officials, including senior military personnel (Barua, 2018: 61). In the solution of transboundary water problems, official diplomacy alone is not sufficient to establish e cooperation structure among sovereign states due to difficulties associated with the equal distribution and management of water resources. Further official diplomacy is capable of wielding political power to influence the direction of negotiation and results. However, conflict resolution approaches may lose their function due to the distribution of power among the coastline countries (Wolf et al., 2003: 8).



The second type is Path 1.5 Diplomacy (Semi-official Diplomacy). State and civil society express interactive forms. It emerges with the organization of complementary/parallel forums aimed at increasing the effectiveness of states (Dore, 2003: 6). Forums usually emerge where there is a lack of communication emerges (Barua, 2018: 61). This is based on negotiation and discursive processes in which actors are given the opportunity to engage in active discussion to learn about their common interests (Dore, 2003: 7).

The other type is Path 2 Diplomacy (Informal Diplomacy). Path 2 Diplomacy is defined as an informal discussion between government and non-governmental stakeholders facilitated by a neutral third actor. It tries to involve leaders of academic, religious (Susskind and Islam, 2012: 4), non-state actors (Kittikhoun and Schmeier, 2019: 3) and other civil society actors who have influential power, rather than representatives of the government, in the dialogue. It is also more interested in re-establishing the relationship between the parties, rather than negotiating disagreements between the parties (Barua, 2018: 61-62).

The last type is Path 3 Diplomacy (Informal Diplomacy). It is a type of interpersonal diplomacy undertaken by individuals and private groups that involves promoting interaction and understanding between opposing views, raising awareness, and supporting these views. It tries to bring communities together through dialogues or mutual relations for the development of riverside local governments. There are informal dialogue and problem-solving activities aimed at promoting new thinking and building relationships to guide the formal process. Most of these activities are support or extensions of state diplomacy (Barua, 2018: 61-62).

## Conclusion

It is one of the important points put forward in this study that diplomacy and its tools play a key role in terms of bringing the states together under one roof for cooperation in the region. Diplomacy and tools create channels of communication in a dispute over a common resource, encouraging the discussion of issues between state parties. In this process, which starts with dialogue and negotiation, trust is built between the actors, and undertakes a supportive task for riparian states to come together through cooperation mechanisms. States with common water have a competitive stance due to the aim of being effective and managing the resource. Therefore, water diplomacy comes into play at this point because this situation disrupts the balance of peace and stability in the region. By resolving the dispute, sustainable regional stability and peace environment is established. In this context, water diplomacy is one of the diplomacy tools used in case of agreement or conflict regarding water resources. It directs the parties to cooperate to resolve disputes over common water resources and bring stability and peace to the region again. Greater Mekong Subregion is a structure established to transform the cooperation between the state parties in a dispute related to the Mekong River Basin. This institution played an encouraging role in creating an environment of cooperation by gathering the states of the region under one roof with water diplomacy and tools and building trust.

Although the concept of regional cooperation was primarily in European Countries after the Second World War, it became more popular with the new wave of regionalism after



the 1980s. The concept was originally seen in providing regional integration, but in the new period, it has emerged more widely, especially in developing and partially undeveloped countries. Most states in different regions in the international system are in different socio-economic positions and many of them do not have the ability to take part in the system. It comes together with other states in the region through cooperation mechanisms in other fields such as trade, environment, and energy to take part in this system and maintain its existence. The actors in question tend more towards cooperation structures within the region due to not having effective power on a global basis. At the regional level, areas of cooperation may vary by states involved in institutions they deem necessary to pursue their national interests. Actors are involved in various cooperation such as the Mekong River Commission (water resource management) or ASEAN (security-based cooperation structures). Actors also turn to such institutional structures for the efficient use and management of common resources, as well as profit. The fact that disagreements over common resources will adversely affect the parties makes actors inclined towards cooperation.

In a nutshell, water diplomacy is an important tool to develop good neighborly relations in politically sensitive areas, as well as improving technical water cooperation. Disputes over water resources affect states in many ways, including economic development, culture, and political stability, and can lead to conflicts within or between states. It promotes the creation of good relations in many areas such as cooperation on water, food security, economic stability, enhanced regional security, and integration of active trade relations, and at the same time emerges as one of the diplomacy tools aiming at the sustainability of peace, security, and prosperity in the region. For this reason, it is observed that water diplomacy has an important role in connecting these areas and building trust between riparian countries sharing the same river. Water diplomacy, which is a constantly evolving and dynamic process, takes place in complex political, economic, social, and environmental contexts and shapes actors not only in water fields but also in many other fields. Therefore, water diplomacy not only provides cooperation on the water within the region but also encourages actors to establish relations in many fields such as culture and economy.

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