



International Symposium on Water Diplomacy

Themes

'What is Water Diplomacy?' & Multi-Track Water Diplomacy

Diplomacy is theoretically defined as the art of communication between different parties, both representatives of states, and regular individuals. In International Relations, diplomacy is the art of conducting negotiations, forming alliances, discussing treaties and reaching agreements. On a societal level, diplomacy simply refers to the art of managing and dealing with people successfully, employing tactfulness and skill to ensure there is no ill will. The term multi-track diplomacy was coined based on the recognition that Track I, II and III did not capture the complexity or breadth of unofficial diplomacy lumped under Track II and III diplomacy. Water is a unique resource and a niche diplomacy has evolved around its governance. **Multi-Track Water Diplomacy** therefore aims to interrogate the concept of water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation. Important in the design and evolution of solution spaces is the type of conflict/cooperation and the level at which the conflict/activity emerges i.e. at the local, national, regional, or international level. This has a direct impact on who the appropriate and legitimate diplomats are.

A Regional Approach to Water Diplomacy

A **Regional Approach to Water Diplomacy** can lead to more effective water governance. Benefit sharing is espoused to be a standard of best practice when it comes to water resources sharing in the international river basin context. This approach explicitly articulates the options for water sharing and their trade-offs with the ultimate goal of promoting the sustainable use of transboundary water resources. Emphasis is on the development of 'baskets of benefits' at a regional level by identifying 'Positive Sum Outcomes' or win-win solutions to benefit all water sharing states. Regional cooperation can take the form of integrated infrastructure, markets and trade as is evident by the development of Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The drivers of regional integration often arise from outside the water sector. Opportunities for improved transboundary water cooperation might be the result of increased regionalism. Redefining the 'unit' of cooperation as a region, be it a river basin or economic community illuminates the challenge of nation-states to protect their sovereign interests *vis a vis* regional level cooperation.

Environmental Peacebuilding and Grassroots Diplomacy

Environmental peace-building is an issue specific type of peace-building that can contribute to a sustainable, long-term solution to conflict. It can help to improve of living conditions, by for example improving water supply, and it fosters the building of confidence and trust among adversarial groups. The mutual ecological dependence across territorial borders on a resource such as an international river basin or aquifer can encourage and catalyse cooperation. The first steps of this diplomatic effort is the initiation of a dialogue focused on the shared freshwater ecosystem. A focused dialogue is often easier to initiate than a broad peace-keeping/peace-building dialogue that would normally be pursued through formal political channels at the inter-state level. This environmentally focused dialogue can at a later stage, once trust has be developed, create solution and opportunity spaces for higher level, formal cooperation over shared waters and related areas of interest. This theme is especially interested in environmental peacebuilding efforts at the grassroots – local level i.e. **grassroots diplomacy**.

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The Role of Women in Water Diplomacy

Gender inequality is prevalent in transboundary water issues at multiple levels. Most commonly this is articulated through the recognition of the role that women play in collecting and safeguarding water for domestic use. Gender inequality is however also present in policy and decision making processes at national, regional and international levels. The institutions and organizations responsible for transboundary water governance currently do not reflect a gendered approach, despite international recognition given to the necessity of including women in water management structures at all levels. The **Role of Women in Water Diplomacy** explores the importance of a gendered perspective on cooperation, peace and security in relation to international water governance. Women's participation in decision-making is important throughout the conflict-cooperation-peace cycle. The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy aims to, *inter alia*, strengthen human rights, promote the participation of women as actors in peace processes and peace support operations, and promote the political participation and influence of women in all areas of society. These aims can be universal and underpin our efforts in water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation.

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