

## **Water Competition and Conflict**

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Hello everybody and welcome back to another WaterByte podcast! I am here today to talk to you about competition and conflict involving water. Conflict over water is something that occurs throughout the entire world, in places such as Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the United States. For the most part, the initial cause for the tight competition for water is the rapid growth of the population. The more people that are on the earth, the more sources of water that are being used up. Many countries obtain their water from rivers that flow not only through their own country, but other countries as well. Conflict can quickly occur when a country decides to build a dam which blocks a river from another country, or it can be something that escalates over time due to an agreement that was made hundreds of years ago, such as the case in the Nile basin. These conflicts can then potentially escalate into violent and deadly occurrences known as “Water Wars.”

Like I said before, these conflicts occur all over the world. There have been conflicts over the waters of the Kaveri River in India that can be dated back all the way to 1892 (Jeywin). The disputes are between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, and the origins of the disputes are from agreements that were made by the two Indian states in 1892 and 1924 (Jeywin). Karnataka feels as if Tamil Nadu was allotted much more access to the water of the Kaveri River. Tamil Nadu argues that they have had the same access to the Kaveri River for so

many years that their state has become extremely dependent on the river. The farmers of Karnataka have a big issue with this during a dry season because then water is even less available to them. India eventually tried solving the conflict in 1991 by setting up a tribunal, but it ultimately led to violence and caused more than 100,000 Tamils to leave their state for safer ones. In 2007, Tamil Nadu was officially allocated 11.9 cubic kilometers while Karnataka was allocated only 7.6 cubic kilometers, causing more tension and another appeal from the people of Karnataka (Black & King, 2009). Karnataka is still seeking an equal allotment of the river.

Another conflict over water occurs in the Nile basin. This conflict in the Nile basin is similar to the conflict over the Kaveri River in that one of the main problems is that there was an agreement that was made many years ago that gave Sudan and Egypt control of the Nile (Black & King, 2009). This is a problem because struggling countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya are being seriously deprived of a valuable water source. Egypt's big argument in justifying their excessive use of the Nile basin is the fact that unlike countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia, Egypt's only source of water is the Nile basin. A majority of Egypt's population lives along the Nile and the country as a whole is going through a water shortage. However, the Nile is a large, powerful, useful river, and it is not fair that other countries that are just as needy for more water as Egypt do not get the full benefits of it. There actually was an act that was proposed by four of the ten countries that the Nile goes through, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia, with three other countries also saying that they

would sign, allowing for a more even distribution of water throughout the other countries, but Egypt and Sudan quickly shut this proposal down. With the way tensions are raising, it is only a matter of time before violence occurs (Mulliro, 2010).

A third place where water disputes are occurring is in the United States. The Colorado River runs through seven states and into Mexico, and it is a vital source for millions of people. The Colorado River has had many disputes and still has some going on today. One dispute occurred in the 1950's and it involved the United States and Mexico. These two countries signed an agreement in 1944 that guaranteed Mexico a certain amount of water per year from the Colorado River, but it did not specify the quality that this water had to be (Western Water Assessment). The United States began sending their low quality water to Mexico, infuriating these people. This issue was then resolved in 1974 when it was agreed on that the water that the United States sends down to Mexico has to be of the same quality that the people in the United States would use (Western Water Assessment).

As we have been made aware throughout these WaterByte podcasts, water is in high demand in most places, and this certainly is the case in states such as California. California causes many disputes over their excessive drainage of water from the Colorado River, which is done to try to satisfy the demands of their vast population. The only problem is that other states such as Colorado, Utah, and Arizona need more water as well, causing great debate over how much water each state should receive (Western water Assessment).

I could go on and on giving you examples of places where there is competition and conflict over water. I could talk about how the Upper Jordan River is not equally distributed between Israel and Palestine or how Bolivia and Chile are still arguing over how the Silala River should flow, but you get the main idea (Black & King 2009). The point is that water is becoming a scarce resource, and that's a huge problem when almost 7 billion people need this to survive. Countries can't agree on how rivers that run through them should be dispersed because every country needs and wants more water for their people and industries. Eventually, when countries get desperate enough or just simply fed up, they take measures such as building dams and taking water away from other countries to get what they want. This causes tension, which can ultimately lead to violence, and this is not what we need. We need to find alternate options to obtain water, raise awareness of the issues involving water, and be more careful with the ways we use water. For more information on water conflicts throughout the world, visit [www.worldwater.org](http://www.worldwater.org).

Supplemental Resources:

1. [www.worldwater.org](http://www.worldwater.org)
2. [www.africanwater.org/conflict.htm](http://www.africanwater.org/conflict.htm)
3. [www.waternet.be](http://www.waternet.be)
4. [www.worldwaterwars.com](http://www.worldwaterwars.com)
5. [www.bluegold-worldwaterwars.com](http://www.bluegold-worldwaterwars.com)

References:

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Mulliro, W. (2010) *Nile Basin Conflict: Egypt and Sudan Reject the Agreement*. Retrieved from <http://english.alshahid.net/archives/6878>

Western Water Assessment. *Colorado River-Law and Policy*. Retrieved from [http://wwa.colorado.edu/colorado\\_river/law.html](http://wwa.colorado.edu/colorado_river/law.html)