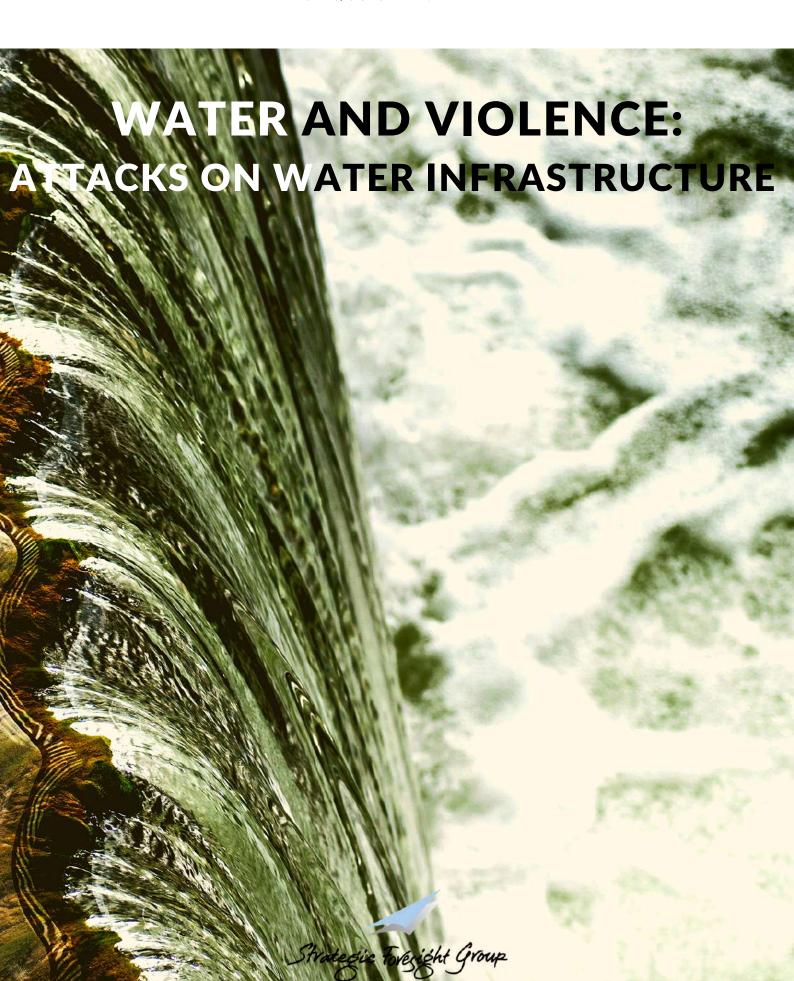
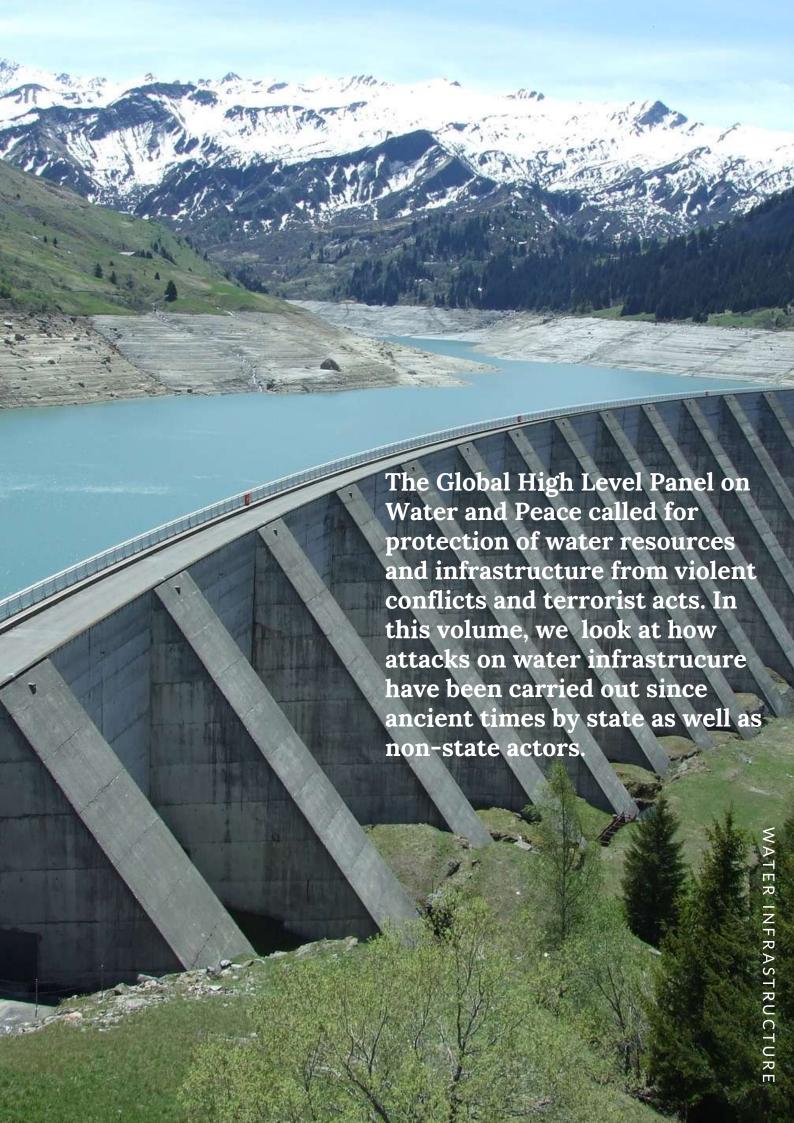
BLUE PEACE BULLETIN

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Introduction

The Report of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, "A Matter of Survival", elucidates how in an on-going armed conflict, states as well as armed non-state groups tend to destroy and capture water installations, deliberately sabotage water supply lines, as well poison water resources to intimidate civilians. This trend of using water during armed conflicts has been around since centuries. Right from the conquests of Julius Caesar to the battles of World War II and more recently the attacks perpetrated by terror organizations and militia, water has played an important role, sometimes inadvertently and at others intentionally.

The 'Water Conflict Chronology List', prepared by the Pacific Institute, provides a detailed account of various events involving attacks on water infrastructures or the use of water as a weapon. An analysis of this list reveals that the attacks pertaining to weaponization of water can be mainly classified into four categories, namely – diversion or cutting off of water, flooding, poisoning of water resources, and destroying water Infrastructures. Although other forms of weaponizing water may exist, these four forms can be seen predominantly.

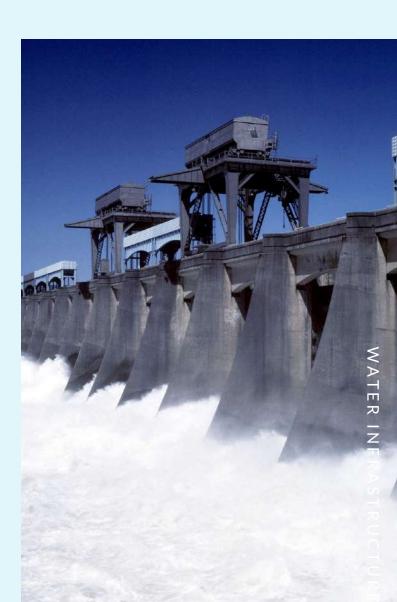
In this bulletin, we have examined the Water Conflict Chronology List and other open sources to discern some trends and patterns with regards to the use of water as a strategic tool in wars and conflicts by both state actors and armed non-state actors ranging over a period as far back as 2500 BC to as recent as 2010 AD.

Patterns and Trends

The following seven trends highlight the manner in which water has been used either as a target (i.e. destruction of water resources) or a weapon (i.e. usage of water to cause some form of damage to the enemy) during armed conflicts:

- (1) Diversion
- (2) Flooding
- (3) Strategic attacks on water infrastructure
- (4) Incidental attacks and collateral damage
- (5) Attacks by Cross Border Terror/Militia Groups on Water
- (6) Role of International Coalitions
- (7) Impact of Civil Wars

Each of these patterns/trends is further examined herein to illustrate the kinds of attacks carried out on or against water.



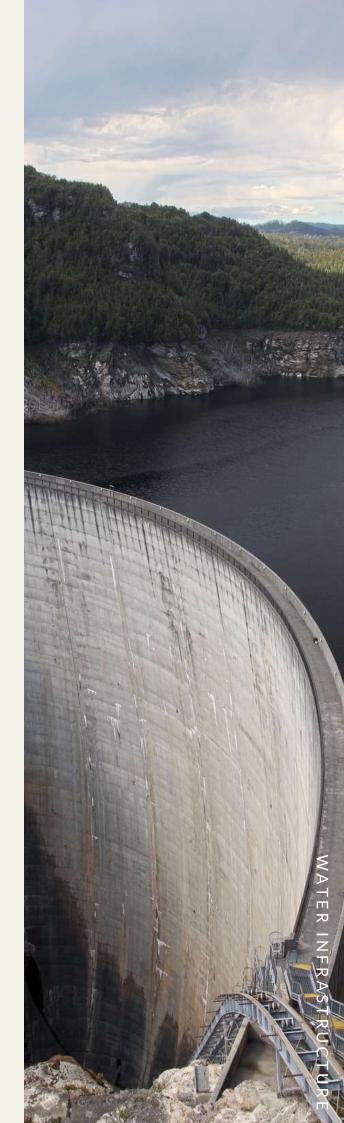
(1) Diversion

The tactic of diversion and cutting off of water was used in one of the first recorded instances of water being a factor in a war, when, in 2500 BC Urlama, the King of Lagash, diverted water from the Lagash region towards the boundary canals, thereby drying up boundary ditches and cutting-off water towards the neighbouring city-state of Umma.In this particular attack, the main aim of the king was to gain control over the border region between Lagash and Umma known as Gu'edena (i.e. the edge of paradise). Water was used as a weapon, through diversion and deprivation, to weaken the forces of Umma. In 537 AD, the Goths (a Germanic tribe) used a similar tactic to gain control over the city of Rome. The Gothic forces surrounded the city and cut off almost all of the aqueducts which provided water towards the city. The lack of water supply forced the city to surrender.

In 1948, the Arab forces cut off the water supply piped from Rosh Ha'ayin, which provided water to West Jerusalem, during the first Arab-Israeli war. In 1964, the Cuban government cut off water supply to the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay in retaliation to the arrest of Cuban fishermen near Florida. Israel cut off the water supply of Beirut during the siege of the city in 1982.

When Kazakhstan did not ship coal to Kyrgyzstan, it closed off the reservoirs that released water to Kazakhstan until the coal supply was provided in 1999. Water supply to Kazakhstan was again briefly cut-off again in 2000 by Uzbekistan due to non-payment of debt by Kazakhstan.In the case of Kazakhstan, it can be discerned that this strategy of withholding water towards the State has been used as leverage by the neighbouring States to get what they want. In this case, the strategy was not used to "weaken enemy forces" as in the other cases, but to coerce a State to comply with the requirements of another State. In the future, this could be a cause for concern as there are many States which share trans-boundary water resources and the upper riparian countries, especially, could utilize this strategy of diverting water to compel the lower riparian countries to do their bidding or take control of regions.

Another alarming trend has been the use of this strategy by armed non-state actors. The Taliban, in Afghanistan, used the



strategy of cutting off the flow of the Helmand River towards Sistan-Baluchistan in Iran multiple times between 1998 and 2001 due to the occurrence of drought in regions of Afghanistan. The Sistan-Baluchistan region heavily relies on the water from the Helmand for its irrigation and this act by the Taliban forced Iranian forces to enter Afghan territory to build canals and restore water supply to the region. The Taliban was only the first of such groups to employ this tactic, which has since been used by terrorist groups in Syria, Yemen and Libya.

(2) Flooding

Flooding has been used as another method of weaponizing water to weaken the enemy or block enemy movements. This mechanism has been quite dangerous as it has, in some cases, caused harm to the actors implementing it through the destruction of farmlands and deaths of thousands of civilians.

The Babylonian King, Hammurabi, used the strategy of flooding, multiple times over a period of 10 years, between 1760 BC and 1750 BC. Hammurabi conquered a large portion of Mesopotamia by using various defensive tactics, one of which included using the waters of the Euphrates River to flood the lands of his enemies. This led to the destruction of crops, thereby majorly impacting the civilians in the flooded regions.

The Dutch were famous for using the flooding method in a lot of their wars between 1573 AD and 1945 AD, this came to be known as the "water line" defence strategy. They were in a position to do so as many parts of the country are low-lying. Their water line defence system was used between 1573 and 1574 to stop the Spanish forces from invading Dutch territory by opening their dikes and flooding the regions. The water line defence was also used by the Dutch in

1672 during the third Dutch War fought against the French. Dikes, dams, forts, batteries and bridges were carefully constructed by the Dutch to enable them to use the waterline system against invading forces, wherein locks could be opened to release water from the Rhine, Waal and Maas rivers and the lisselmeer Lake to flood regions and create an impenetrable barrier. The waterline system was used as a defence by the Dutch for over 340 years, but the Dutch decommissioned them in the 20th Century after World Water II.

One of the most famous instances of flooding being used in a conflict was in the clash between the Chinese and the Japanese. The Chinese Nationalist Army blew up the flood-control walls of the Yellow River in 1939 to prevent Japanese invaders from attacking Wuhan, the headquarters of the Nationalist government. However, the Japanese ultimately managed to carry out the attack and took over Wuhan. The unsuccessful flooding tactic led to the destruction of 3000 square kilometers of Chinese farmland and resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people due to drowning. A comparison of the usage of the flooding strategy by the Dutch and the Chinese demonstrates the unreliability of it. Although it may have proven to be successful for the Dutch, the Chinese lost not only the battle but also large portions of their own land and a large number of their own people.

However, the unpredictability of this strategy has not stopped others from using it. Armed non-state actors have also copied this technique in areas ≤ under their control, where they have utilized the $\stackrel{>}{\rightharpoonup}$ water infrastructures to flood regions. In 2003, an 🛄 unknown terror group attacked multiple sites in the capital city of Iraq through bombs, one of which broke a water main and flooded the streets. 72 Although this may have not have been a ω deliberate attempt to flood a region, but the flooding was a reaction to an attack on a water

system. With the advent of modern technology, the danger of deliberate flooding has only been getting worse. At the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) open session in November 2016 on 'Water, Peace and Security', the Secretary-General informed the Security Council that terror groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) were controlling dams as a strategic tactic. When ISIS had seized control over certain key water infrastructures, they deliberately flooded towns and villages in Iraq and Syria and also threatened to flood Baghdad.

(3) Strategic Attacks on Water Infrastructure

Another trend is that of having strategically planned attacks specifically targeting water infrastructure during conflicts. For the purposes of this section, the focus has been on attacks carried out by States and does not include attacks by independent groups or any armed non-state actors.

While some may argue that attacks targeting or weaponizing water are mostly strategic, there are some instances where these attacks are simply opportunistic and not ones that have been planned meticulously to specially target the water system. To differentiate between the opportunistic attacks and the strategic ones, we have used two parameters - either the same Empires or States have tactically utilized water as a defence system multiple times over a

period of time or they have developed technology or weaponry which specifically uses water or is used on water.

The Assyrians appear to be the first known empire that used water as a strategic tool in multiple conflicts between 700 BC to 600 BC. The Assyrian King, Sargon II, destroyed the irrigation network and flooded the lands of the Halidians of Armenia. In another instance, an Assyrian ruler, Esarhaddon, cut off food and water to the people of Tyre when he seized the city, forcing the people to surrender. Assyrians were also known to poison the wells of their enemies with rye ergot, a type of fungus disease.

Julius Caesar is another ruler who used water as a weapon against his enemies. During the Battle of Alesia in 52 BC, fought between Julius Caesar and the Gallic tribes (the Gauls). Caesar's men constructed а set fortifications, called as 'circumvallation' around the city of Alesia. The fortifications were filled with water from the surrounding rivers to create a blockade and keep out the forces of the Gauls. At the Battle of Uxellodunum in 51 BC, between Julius Caesar and the Gauls. Caesar attacked the water supplies of Uxellodunum when he seized the city, forcing the Gauls to surrender.

The British also strategically targeted water in certain conflicts to weaken their enemies. In 1777, the British and Hessians (i.e. German soldiers who served as auxiliaries to the



British Army) attacked the water system of New York during the Revolutionary War. During the Second World War, the Royal Air Force bombed the Möhne Dam and the Sorpe Dam in Germany. These strikes on the dams were carried out by a special squadron of 19 Lancaster bombers, known the "Dambusters". Although the Germans had placed torpedo nets in front of their dams for defence, the dams were targeted using a bouncing bomb developed by Sir Barnes Wallis. The attack on the dams destroyed four power-plants and 12 war production factories, which resulted in flooding, killing 1,600 people and destroying 3000 acres of German farmland.

(4) Incidental Attacks and Collateral Damage

There have been instances during conflicts where water infrastructure has been damaged or water polluted unintentionally. was **Bombings** in regions near water infrastructure, instances of polluting of water resources through disposing of bodies, poisoning water bodies to spread diseases in a region or ruin agricultural lands are some of the cases in which water itself was not the primary or intended target of the attack, but nonetheless water and water infrastructure were impacted.

The dikes of the Yellow River were damaged in the fighting between the forces of the Manchus (Qing dynasty) and Ming dynasty in 1642 which led to the deaths of nearly 300,000 of the 378,000 citizens in the region. In another instance, the German army flooded the Pontine Marshes in Italy with the purpose of bringing mosquitoes and malaria to the region and disrupting the allied forces. This act of biological warfare had limited military bearing but impacted the local population that later returned to the region due to the spread of malaria through the water in the marshes.

This trend can also be observed during the Vietnam War where the United States of America (US) forces destroyed irrigation water supply systems and river dikes in North Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s by bombing regions around them. The US insisted that these were not intentional attacks as the US forces had been ordered not to target dikes so as not to cause flooding and civilian casualties in the region. Also during the Vietnam War, reports state that the US sprayed chemical agents in Vietnam along strategic waterways which have had a long-term impact on the vegetation and wetlands in the area.

The Tigris River has been polluted through oil spills caused by bombing on oil pipelines located near the river. In 2007, an unknown group bombed an oil pipeline near Baiji in Iraq which polluted the waters of Tigris. This water was the major source for drinking water for nearby communities in the region. This strategy was notably adopted by ISIS while targeting the water in Iraq since gaining control over some of the strategic areas in the country.

(5)Attacks by Cross Border Terror/Militia Groups on Water

Critical infrastructures such as defence bases, police checkpoints, transportation sector, have undoubtedly served as an attractive target for armed non-state actors because of the 'attack-to-shock' value in terms of economic harm, symbolic value, public visibility and civilian harm. A marked trend which emerges from the Water Conflict Chronology List is the direct co-relation between the advent of armed non-state actors in the theatre of war and attacks on critical water infrastructure such as dams.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on New York, numerous fake incidents of terrorist activity were reported around the world.US law enforcement and intelligence agencies learned that Al Qaeda members were gathering

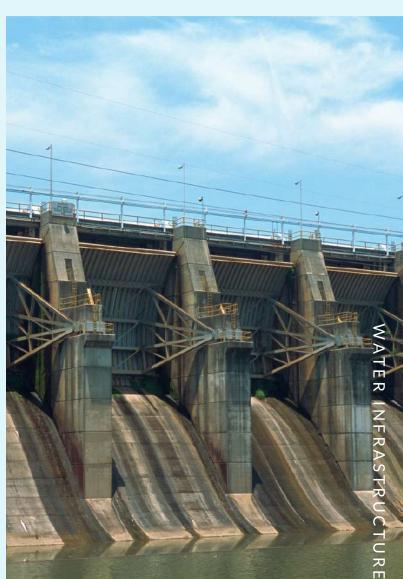
information on water supply and wastewater management practices in the US and abroad. In 2003, Al-Qaeda issued a threat to US water systems via a call to a London-based, Saudiowned magazine. The spokesman told the magazine that "Al Qaeda does not rule out using sarin gas and poisoning drinking water in US and other Western cities." Armed non-state actors such as Taliban and Hezbollah, began reaping the benefits accrued by such attacks by carrying out deliberate attacks on water infrastructure in lieu of the realization of their varied goals.

One of the fields where such a tactic played out was the Kajaki district in Helmand province which holds strategic importance in Afghanistan because of the opium fields and the Kajaki Dam. Afghanistan witnessed tense political and social instabilities since the Soviet invasion in the late 1970's followed by the US invasion. In order to garner legitimacy for their parallel government in Afghanistan and raise revenue for itself through the sale of electrical power, the Taliban repeatedly attacked and attempted to capture the Kajaki Dam in 2003, 2005 and 2007. So much so that in April 2015, the Afghanistan state power firm warned that the Taliban controlled one-third of the electricity from the Kajaki plant, and were taxing residents for it. A distinct trend from these incidents reveals that the capture of the dam was deemed crucial by insurgents in order to destabilize the region and hamper livelihoods, thus establishing supremacy and laying the foundation for a proto-State in southern Afghanistan.

Furthermore, whenever military offensives have been struck to weaken the Taliban's territorial control, the Taliban began responding by threatening to blow up critical water infrastructure in the region. For instance, when in 2008, the Pakistani Army began a major crackdown against the Taliban in Swat and Bajaur, the Taliban retaliated by threatening to blow up the Warsak Dam, the main water supply for Peshawar. Such intimidation only added to the

haplessness of the residents in the terror-infested region and led to the displacement of people.

Water infrastructure was one of the many casualties of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict of 2006. What seemingly began as an exchange of fire by Hezbollah and Israel on purely military objects on the Israel-Lebanon border, later encompassed deliberate attacks on natural resources such as the trans-boundary Litani River and Wazzani springs. The Litani River, Litani Dam, several irrigation anals and water pipes came indiscriminately under fire during the armed exchange between Hezbollah and Israel's armed forces which lasted for a month. Israel's repeated attacks on water facilities during the war, points in the direction of weakening Hezbollah's presence in south Lebanon and establishment of its presence in the region. It has also been reported that Israel's recovery of control over its main sources of water at Wazzani springs which flows through the Lebanon-Israel border may have been the most important gain from the crisis in Lebanon.





Attacks on water infrastructure were used as a tactic by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to establish itself as an insurgent group fighting Turkish armed forces. In the late 1970's, the PKK was formed which claimed to represent the Kurdish cause and establish Kurdish autonomy; however they failed to gain any traction with the disillusioned Kurds. In the mid-1980's, PKK began carrying out attacks on the Atatürk Dam with the dual objective of crushing the symbol of Turkish oppression in order to gain a following and stopping construction which drove up the cost of the project.

(6) **Role of International Coalitions**

The risk facing water infrastructure from attacks during hostilities has been acknowledged by international coalitions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the case of the Kajaki Dam, NATO, which is a military coalition, subsumed the role for the protection of the dam from repeated attacks by the Taliban. However, in the Kosovo war, NATO was in gross violation of the principles of proportionality when it attacked civilian infrastructure including infrastructure to achieve its military objective. Two distinct examples involving NATO are elaborated below to highlight omissions and commissions by NATO with regard to water infrastructure.

During NATO's indiscriminate air bombing in the 1999 Kosovo conflict, the destruction of refineries and other industrial facilities located on the banks of the Danube caused the release of polluting substances in the Danube river and groundwater resources. Additionally, the widespread practice of well water contamination was adopted by both \leq NATO and Yugoslavian forces. Throughout the Kosovo conflict, Serbian and Yugoslav forces m deliberately rendered wells unusable by disposing chemicals, dead animals, and even human corpses in them. According to the International Committee 72 of the Red Cross (ICRC), which ran a watersanitizing operation in Kosovo, "Of the 20,000 wells in Kosovo, over half are believed to have

been contaminated with animal or human remains or with rubbish, or have simply grown stagnant through lack of use." In another assessment report of environmental damage in Bosnia-Herzegovina, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) observed that, during the conflict in Kosovo, the use of depleted uranium caused the contamination of some groundwater resources.

The Kajaki Dam situated on the Helmand River in southern Afghanistan was built by the US in the 1950's during the Cold War era. However, the dam has never really been operational owing to two reasons - the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the late 1970's which led to a halt in the construction of the dam and the "war on terror" launched by the US in 2001 against the Taliban which led to a US bombing of the transmission line of the dam. Thereafter, the Kajaki Dam has been the scene of regular clashes between the Taliban and international peacekeepers such as NATO guarding it. In 2003, after a democratic government was established in Afghanistan, **NATO** began expanding its sphere of influence and became engaged in intense fighting in Kandahar and the Helmand region where the Taliban had a strong territorial control. The Kajaki Dam, which stood right in the middle of Taliban's area of control, also required significant work across wide swaths of Taliban territory in order to connect the dam to Kandahar city with transmission lines. The Taliban attacked convoys of NATO troops and USAID officials who made several attempts to refurbish the dam. Violent attacks by Taliban militants forced work on refurbishing the dam to stop in 2006. The Kajaki which was at the centre of attacks by the Taliban noted a significant drop in attacks after 2012.

(7) Impact of Civil Wars

Attacks carried out by non-state actors and state actors on water infrastructure groups which are limited to a domestic jurisdiction show that the location of a target relative to the terrorists' base can play a crucial role. A target which is located in the same area as that of the terrorists' base might prompt the terrorists to use crude and readily available weapons to carry out attacks.

In an effort to undermine governmental power, in the early 2000's the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) resorted to the tactic of attacking national infrastructure in order to disrupt basic public services in a bid to inflict maximum economic damage to the government and also to try to gain political leverage. In 2002, it detonated an explosive device on a valve of the Chingaza Dam; in 2003 and 2004, FARC used agents to contaminate poisoning water installations. FARC's ability to control water resources and water supplies to cities and municipalities was used by them as a bargaining chip to gain political leverage over local officials.

Disputes over scarce water and grazing land between African farmers and Arab pastoralist communities triggered the Darfur war in 2003. Government-backed Arab militias known as 'Janjaweed' intentionally contaminated wells as part of a strategy of harassment against displaced populations. They supplemented this act with throwing dead bodies in wells in Central and South Darfur.

Construction of water infrastructure projects has in certain cases compelled indigenous peoples to take up arms to protect the ecosystem which they regard to be an intrinsic part of their identity. One case in point is the Hat Gyi Dam, which is one of a series of dams that is scheduled to be built on the Salween River (Thai-Myanmar border) as part of a joint project of the Thailand and Myanmar

governments. The dams are opposed by many environmentalists, human rights groups and local residents. Some reports claim the dams would impact the livelihoods of more than 10 million people from 13 ethnic groups in Myanmar. In 2007, two targeted attacks on Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) employees in May and September led to the evacuation of the employees and temporary suspension of the project. In May 2007, an EGAT geologist working at the dam site was killed by a land mine near the project site. This was followed by an attack in September in which mortar shells were fired at a worker camp which killed an EGAT geologist and construction worker. This attack was attributed to rebels belonging to the Karen National Union (KNU). The KNU believes that such dam projects will negatively impact ethnic rural life and destroy the ecology of the region.

Recommendations

Water infrastructure has been an attractive target for attacks because of the high impact loss as well as the high degree of vulnerability. Regardless of the theatre of conflict – be it intra-state, inter-state, genocide, war, etc., and regardless of the actors involved in such conflicts – States, armed non-state actors, militia groups, insurgent groups etc., water infrastructure has been targeted.

While the past cannot be changed, it is possible to secure water infrastructure in the future. The Report of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, "A Matter of Survival", and the Blue Peace Bulletin on Regional Water Protection Framework (June 2019) provide certain recommendations which can be employed for the protection of water resources and infrastructure. States, humanitarian aid agencies and other stakeholders have a crucial role to play in safeguarding water installations.

At the start, it is imperative for States to agree on common platforms for dialogues which can be used as a launch pad to discuss the issue of protection of shared water infrastructure. Matters which can be addressed through such a cooperative forum can include, inter alia, identification of water infrastructure situated on shared water resources, joint measures for protection of the said infrastructures, potential for involvement of relevant stakeholders and designation of armed non-state actors who are likely to perpetrate attacks. States sharing trans-boundary water resources could also use such a platform for



exchanging information which would be relevant to further safeguarding critical water infrastructures from being targeted, especially by armed non-state actors.

Exercises like the one carried out above involving an analysis of attacks on water and mapping out the strategies adopted by various actors assumes importance in contemporary times because of the scarcity of water coupled with inequitable distribution, low levels of security, geo-political goals, imbalanced world order, fragile states, media coverage etc., which can help to chart out different ways to discuss means to address the crucial issue of protection of water infrastructure.

In addition to the role played by States, stakeholders such as humanitarian aid agencies are instrumental in providing on-ground assistance in conflict regions. These agencies have been involved in various undertakings ranging from repairing water infrastructures damaged during the conflicts to attempting to negotiate safe-zones amongst conflicting parties to protect critical water installations. Peacekeeping missions, on the other hand, possess knowledge of on the ground happenings in conflict zones and can work jointly with military operations to safeguard water infrastructure from attacks by armed non-state actors.

Additionally, the above analysis of past attacks on water infrastructure also elucidates that there has been little to no legal consequence for attacks on water infrastructure by State and armed non-state actors. In order to curtail such actions, ways to condemn and censure such attacks can be laid down as well as ways and means to strengthen implementation of relevant provisions of international humanitarian law pertaining to water.

Overarching patterns of attacks on water infrastructure by State and armed non-state actors witnessed in the past still hold ground. It, therefore, becomes absolutely vital to use such past attacks as a base point to formulate strategies for the future to secure water resources and infrastructure. The aforementioned recommendations attempt to halt a repetition of such past attacks and collaboratively work to secure water infrastructure.



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