

BLUE PEACE BULLETIN

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WATER AND VIOLENCE: REVISITING CONFLICT ZONES



CONFLICT

The Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace called for protection of water resources and infrastructure from violent conflicts and terrorist acts. In this volume, we revisit some of the conflict zones that we have looked at in earlier bulletins and included input from a leaders panel organised at the CRIC Annual Conference at Oxford.



REVISITING CONFLICT ZONES

Introduction

The Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace (GHLP) in one of its recommendations highlighted the issue of protection of water resources and infrastructure against acts of violence by state and non-state actors or terror groups. In order to further the recommendation of the GHLP, Strategic Foresight Group (SFG), since January 2019, has endeavored through monthly bulletins to highlight the acts of violence carried out against water resources and infrastructure in different countries and regions.

Of these, five bulletins cover regions with active conflicts-1. Yemen 2. Mali 3. Ukraine 4. Somalia 5. Middle East (Blue Strike List). While acts of violence on water infrastructure could be deliberate, water has also been collateral in armed conflict. For example: In Yemen, Somalia, Syria and Iraq there have been indiscriminate attacks against water. Mali on the other hand has witnessed clashes on water by ethnic groups.

The bulletins also state possible measures that could be taken in each country or region that would help to reduce or eliminate violence against water. In Yemen, the issue of protection of water resources is still at a nascent stage. Hence, it was recommended that local or grass roots organizations as well as international actors providing humanitarian aid must also focus on protection as well as re-building measures. In Ukraine, the establishment of 'protection zones' as recommended by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was highlighted. The zones would create an area within the conflict where infrastructure would remain protected by all parties to the conflict.

The extension of mandates of river basin organizations such as the Niger Basin Authority or the Organization for the Development of Senegal River (OMVS) to include a security element to protect water resources was recommended for Mali. Thus the bulletins that comprehensively covered attacks against water, as well as gave measures for protection which was very context specific, received appreciation from the international community. However, conflicts are dynamic and the situation on the ground is changing constantly.

Therefore, this bulletin 'Revisiting Conflict Zones' has been an endeavor to do a stock-taking of the past one year and analyze the changes that have come about, if any, in these countries or regions. The bulletin mentions each of the conflict zones separately, provides an over view of the conflict and the water situation. It then goes on to provide an update on the situation in each conflict zone vis-à-vis water from the date of the publication of each individual bulletin till December 2019. There is a futuristic analysis mentioned in relation to each conflict. This bulletin therefore provides both an appraisal of the situation as well as an indication as what could be in store in the future.



YEMEN

Highlights

The crisis in Yemen which has been on-going for the last five years seems to have no respite despite repeated efforts by the United Nations to bring an end to the conflict.

The Blue Peace Bulletin on Yemen published on January 2019 states in no uncertain terms that the water situation in Yemen is deteriorating at a fast pace. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) and the Saudi-led coalition have directly and indirectly attacked water infrastructure in several governorates in Yemen. Additionally, the problem in Yemen becomes more compounded because there are no recent statistics available with regard to water availability in Yemen. The government's efforts to provide water to civilians have been thwarted by Ansar Allah, who has also used the tactic of providing water to civilians in order to gain some traction in the region.

Several INGO's and international organizations such as the United Nations are working on the ground tirelessly to facilitate access to water to civilians. However, efforts to rebuild/restore damaged water infrastructure has not met with much success since it seems to be a pointless investment to rebuild water infrastructure which is repeatedly attacked.

Updates

Since the publication of the bulletin in January 2019, the situation in Yemen with regards to water resources and infrastructure continues to remain bleak because of deliberate attacks on water infrastructure by different parties to the conflict. A startling statistic from a leaked classified French defence ministry document reveals that as of February 2019, "a total of 1,140 bombing missions targeted agricultural production and the country's food and water supplies, including farms, markets, fishing boats, and reservoirs of drinking water."

In governorates where the Houthis have territorial control, civilians have been unable to access water since water infrastructure has been damaged during the on-going conflict. As of August 2019, a part of the population in Al Dhale is not receiving any water supplies because the sole water reserve in the area is under the control of Houthis. Additionally, many water pumps were damaged or were not working. Hajjour



district in northern Yemen had previously remained immune to attacks by Houthis because of the strong revolts by the local tribesmen. However, in February 2019, when the Houthis made an attempt to infiltrate and capture Hajjour and failed to do so, they imposed a tight siege and prevented food and water trucks from going in over 25 times. Furthermore, all over Yemen, the sharp decrease in fuel access has also limited water availability as diesel is required to operate water treatment facilities and to pump groundwater. Skyrocketing fuel prices have raised the costs of transportation, making food, water, and other basic goods more expensive.

The month of August 2019 was particularly violent in terms of attacks on water infrastructure and access to water resources. Emirati troops allied to the Southern Transitional Council (STC) seized control of Aden city amongst other targets. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) claimed that as a result of the conflict, some 200,000 were left without access to water. In another instance, fighting between Yemen's government forces and military units of the STC resulted in electricity and water supplies being disrupted in southern areas such as Aden and Abyan.

What preceded the violent month of August 2019 was a deliberate attempt to attack civilian infrastructure by Houthis not just in Yemen but also in Saudi Arabia. In June 2019, the Houthis carried out a cruise missile attack on the Al Shuqaiq power and desalination water plant which is located in the Jizan province of Saudi Arabia which is very close to the Yemen-Saudi border.

In September 2019, a group of US senators wrote to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman to step up payments for UN humanitarian programs in Yemen, failing which five million Yemenis will be deprived of clean w

water. Also, around 80% of Yemen's population is in urgent need of aid and millions of people have problems accessing water, according to the UN. In such a scenario, it is noteworthy to mention the efforts by various humanitarian organizations that continue to provide civilians with access to water and are also involved in the rehabilitation of damaged water infrastructure.

In July 2019, UNICEF reached over 140,000 internally displaced persons through emergency water trucking, construction of emergency latrines etc. UNICEF was also involved in conducting interventions which inter alia included rehabilitating water and sewage networks. Most importantly, UNICEF conducted several awareness campaigns to encourage civilians to use chlorinated water as a precautionary measure against cholera which is rampant in Yemen. Additionally, UNICEF work is underway for the rehabilitation and augmentation of the water and sanitation projects across Yemen at nearly 70 locations. In the Hajjah governorate which came under repeated attacks between the Houthis and Saudi forces which led to water infrastructure being damaged, UNICEF undertook the work of installing new water networks. From January-June 2019, 342,000 people received relief assistance of food or cash while 3 million people benefited from the ICRC activities in the field of water and sanitation in Yemen.

It is pertinent to note that in a September 2019 report by the United Nations Human Rights Council, a Group of Experts attributed direct responsibility to the parties to the conflict regarding the humanitarian situation in Yemen. It was also found that the continued impact of attacks against civilian infrastructure such as water facilities, food transport as well as impeding humanitarian access have exacerbated the disastrous humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Future

It is not without reason that Yemen is termed as the world's worst crisis. So far, there has been no accountability for the transgressions committed by parties in Yemen's five-year conflict. Countries like the US, UK, France etc. continue to back the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen, which may actually help and embolden the Saudi coalition to perpetrate potential war crimes in Yemen including attacks on civilian infrastructure such as water infrastructure.

While the Houthis had previously targeted civilian infrastructure such as airports and air bases in Saudi Arabia, their June 2019 attack on a desalination water plant located on the Saudi-Yemen border showcased their changing tactic towards undertaking retaliatory attacks on the Saudis with the use of sophisticated weaponry. This is also evidenced by their attacks on the Aramco oil facilities in Saudi Arabia in September 2019. The Aramco attacks was followed by a statement by the Houthi spokesperson which stated that the group will carry out more attacks targeting infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and also mentioned that "oil is not more precious than the blood of Yemeni people".

The Houthis, who earlier, appeared to be focused on gaining territorial control in Yemen and were involved in many instances of cutting out water supplies to the people in Yemen, now, seem to be shifting their strategy by blaming Saudi Arabia entirely for the on-going conflict and suffering, thereby justifying their slew of attacks on Saudi infrastructure. If the conflict in Yemen continues to extend beyond the Yemeni borders, it is likely that the Houthis will carry out many more attacks on water infrastructure not just in Yemen but also in Saudi, especially since the group is now in possession of advanced weapons like cruise missiles and drones.

There remains a possibility of further outbreaks of cholera in Yemen. In governorates where Houthis have territorial control and with the on-going clashes between the coalition and Houthis, humanitarian access will continue to be severely hampered. As a result, damaged water infrastructure such as pipelines and sewage disposal systems, use of contaminated water for agriculture, lack of potable drinking water could lead to more cholera outbreaks in Yemen.



THE MIDDLE EAST

Highlights

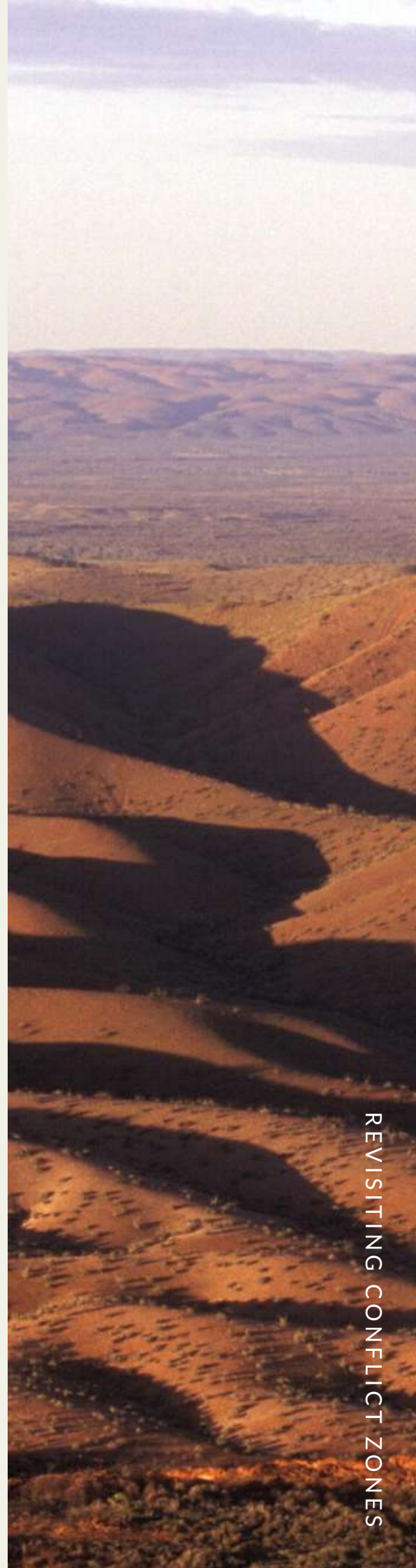
The bulletin 'Middle East Blue Strike List' published in March 2019 serves as a comprehensive compendium of the attacks on water infrastructure by state and armed non-state actors in Syria and Iraq from 2012 to 2019 which was the peak of the armed violence. This bulletin highlights that non-state armed groups chose to target water infrastructure during conflicts as a part of a larger strategy to inflict harm on their opposition.

Tactics like destroying and capturing water installations, deliberately sabotaging or poisoning water resources to intimidate civilians, capturing dams and barrages and using them to flood or starve downstream populations have been frequent. This highlights how vulnerable water infrastructure is in terms of its security and the massive impact that it can have if controlled or manipulated by non-state armed groups.

Updates

Reports suggest that ISIS is gathering new strength and resurging across Iraq and Syria. In a report released by the US Department of Defense in August 2019, it was stated that "Despite losing its territorial 'caliphate,' ISIS solidified its insurgent capabilities in Iraq and was resurging in Syria from April through June." Moreover, in a report issued by the Pentagon on 'Operation Inherent Resolve', it was stated that ISIS retains between 14,000 and 18,000 members in Iraq and Syria. In September 2019, the commander of SDF said that "ISIS's new insurgency was enabled because the group had some freedom of movement in areas bordering the region of Syria under the Syrian Democratic Forces control, including across the border in Iraq and places west of the Euphrates River that are ostensibly controlled by the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which the SDF has stayed independent of."

The US-led military coalition continues to battle daily against the remaining ISIS fighters holed up in a stretch of desert straddling the Iraq-Syria border. In July 2019, the US-led military coalition "carried out 33 air or artillery strikes targeting ISIS fighters, buildings, tunnels, weapons caches and vehicles in Iraq." However, there is no mention of water resources or water-related infrastructure was attacked. In September 2019, US coalition and



Iraqi security forces were conducting an operation to clear ISIS forces from Qanus island along the Tigris river. In September 2019, US aircraft carried out an airstrike against ISIS in Jazirat Hawi Aslan on the Tigris River, about 15 km south of Mosul in which 8 ISIS operatives were killed.

With regard to water infrastructure, efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate water infrastructure are being carried out by different organizations. In June 2019, the Iraq Security and Humanitarian Monitor (ISHM) reported that in Sulaimaniya province, 30 of the province's 56 water pumps were defective, which could lead to severe shortages of potable water in the province. In September 2019, USAID released funds for rehabilitating water tanks in villages surrounding Nineveh town of AlQosh.

Future

As per various American defence sources, ISIS is gathering strength and resurging in Iraq and Syria. However, a perusal of several other reports reveals that ISIS is close to being annihilated completely. Therefore, as it exists, there is a difference of opinion on the current state of ISIS. If ISIS is resurging as per reports, then there is a legitimate threat that ISIS will begin with radicalization activities, since it has lost its territorial control. This could also translate into threat to civilian infrastructure once they regroup and become stronger. If ISIS is close to decimation, then State parties can come together and discuss measures to protect existing water infrastructure and rebuilding water infrastructure from future terror attacks.

Another issue lies in the fact that the approach to tackle ISIS is fragmented, there are no unified efforts to tackle ISIS. Geopolitical upheavals in the Middle East with specific reference to Syria, Turkey and Iraq, can become a cause of concern in posing a united front while defeating ISIS.



MALI

Highlights

The Blue Peace Bulletin published in April 2019, titled “Water and Violence: Mali”, presented the status of the conflict in Mali and its impact on the water infrastructure in the country. The Bulletin described the manner in which four groups, the Ansar Dine, the Al Murabitoun, the Macina Liberation Front (MLF) and the Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)) which were all active in the region from 2012 to 2017, joined forces to form the Jama'aNusratul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM). The JNIM, which had been operating mainly around the northern areas of Mali, started carrying out attacks also towards the central and southern regions.

As of April 2019, JNIM was undertaking mostly non-water related attacks in Mali and had not directly attacked water infrastructure. However, Al-Andalus, the media agency of AQIM (also a part of JNIM), had repeatedly stated throughout 2017-2018 that the group would target Western companies, particularly French companies, and other such installations, which could extend to the country's hydropower installations as well. In addition to the JNIM, several groups such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have also been active in Mali. Although, these groups had not, at the time of the Bulletin being published, targeted water infrastructure in Mali, ISIS has used the tactic of weaponizing water in the Middle Eastern countries.

Another threat to the water in Mali, as observed in the Bulletin, has been the constant clashes between the different ethnic tribes in the country. The Bulletin describes the clashes between the Fulani herders and the Bambara and Dogon farmers (who are linked with the Donzo hunters group) over access to land and water, which have led to the death of hundreds. The Bulletin also provides details on the conflict resolution mechanisms in Mali.



Updates

As of September 2019, the conflict in Mali which began in 2012 is still on-going. The main areas under threat are in the central region of the country, notably in Mopti, Segou and surrounding areas. Reports state that the terrorist activity and inter-community conflicts in these regions have increased considerably.

In August 2019, a water borehole was inaugurated in Sangarebougou, located in the Koulikoro region of Mali. Constructed by the National Tobacco and Matches Company of Mali (Sonatam), this borehole is one of 12 already drilled in the country by the company in the past 5 years. The Sangarebougou structure consists of a water tower and a high-voltage solar pumping system, and is capable of providing water to around 45,000 villagers in the region. The Koulikoro region is located close to the Segou region where JNIM and its related groups have carried out a series of attacks in the past few years. Although they are yet to target water infrastructure, if the activities of the terrorist group were to spread towards the Koulikoro region, the Sangarebougou water infrastructure could be at risk.

The inter-community conflicts in Mali are mainly between the Fulani tribe and the Dogon groups. There are constant clashes over access to land and water between these herders and farmers, as they seek out new pastures and sources of water. To make matters worse, some of the jihadist groups have been providing arms to the ethnic communities and taking advantage of the on-going conflicts. For instance, JNIM has supposedly allied itself with the Fulani tribe through the help of the MLF (a group that forms a part of the JNIM). In June 2019, 75 Dogon villagers were killed and many others wounded in separate attacks in three villages in Mopti. Although no group claimed responsibility for

these attacks, it has further fuelled the growing intercommunity violence in Mali. These clashes come just months after the March 2019 attack which led to the death of around 160 Fulani villagers. The March 2019 attack was one of the worst ethnic clashes in Mali and led to the Malian government dissolving the Dan Nan Ambassagou, the militia group associated with the Dogon tribe.

The constant clashes have deeply impacted the 2018-2019 agricultural season in Mali since farmers are fearful of accessing their farms, possibly due to the fact that weapons are being provided by the armed non-state groups to the clashing herders and farmers.

The conflict has also led to internal displacement of people. As of July 2019, the number of internally displaced persons in Mopti and Segou were 79,900. Furthermore, around 3.9million Malians are in need of humanitarian assistance and about a quarter of Mali's population, which is around 4.5 million people, don't have access to clean water. Many regions of Mali also experienced heavy rains in August 2019. With continuous rain for 3 days, between 24-27 August 2019, areas in Koulikoro, Timbuktu, Kidal, Mopti and Ménaka regions experienced flooding that led to major damage and affected at least 6,474 people. This incident could further increase the number of displaced people in Mali, as many people have lost their households due to the flooding.

The clash between the ethnic Tuareg and the government forces is what started the conflict in Mali in 2012 and in 2015 the leaders of Tuareg group had signed a peace deal with the Malian government. The UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA, has been working towards implementing the peace deal in Mali. In August 2019, the UN Security Council unanimously

voted on the French-sponsored resolution to extend its sanctions regime in Mali with the intention to target groups that have caused the delay in implementation of the 2015 peace agreement. The resolution extends the sanctions including travel ban and assets freeze regime until 31 August 2020, and the mandate of the panel of experts monitoring their implementation until 30 September 2020.

Additionally, in June 2019, the UN Security Council also renewed the mandate of the MINUSMA for one year due to the deteriorating security situation in Mali. The Council stated that MINUSMA's primary priority would be to support the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, but they would also have the priority to reduce inter-communal clashes in Central Mali.

Future

One of the biggest threats that Malians have to face in the coming future will be over access to water. The ethnic clashes between the Fulani, Dogon and Bambara tribes, which are mainly over access to land and water, could continue

in the foreseeable future. Although, JNIM's main focus has been to drive out the French and UN troops from Mali, they have taken advantage of the ethnic clashes to recruit people and make money through the sales of drugs and other illicit merchandise. The government of Mali could collaborate within international organizations and local level non-governmental organizations to find solutions to the ethnic clashes and find ways to de-weaponize the clashes, thereby undermining the involvement of jihadist groups like JNIM. The renewal of the mandate of MINUSMA's and the extension of their presence in Mali for one more year could bring some relief to the Malian people as one of the priority of MINUSMA is to end the inter-community clashes. MINUSMA personnel could assist the Malian government to form some kind of agreement between the clashing parties over sharing of the already scarce water resources in Mali.

Additionally, as mentioned before, at present the terrorist activities and ethnic clashes are taking place around the Mopti and Segou regions, which are both located near the transboundary Niger River. The Niger River flows through 9 countries in Africa, including Mali. The constant fighting over these regions could adversely impact the water from



the River Niger, not only due to the effect of the clashes on the water quality, but also because the water infrastructure could be accessed by the armed non-state groups through the river. The soon to be constructed Kénié hydroelectric power plant in Mali is located on the Niger. The project is to be completed by 2020 and is located around 35 kms from Mali's capital, Bamako. In March 2019, JNIM had attacked a training centre of the European Union close Bamako. If JNIM and its affiliated groups strengthen their strong hold in more regions near the Niger River, this could conversely affect water infrastructure on and around the River.

The threats made by the AQIM (apart of the JNIM) to the French projects in the country also make the water infrastructure vulnerable to future attacks. Aside from JNIM groups and other terrorist groups, Ansaroul Islam could prove to be a threat to the water infrastructure in Mali. Ansaroul Islam is an armed non-state group founded in Burkina Faso in 2015. It has been linked to several Mali-based extremist groups. Ansaroul Islam has targeted water related infrastructure in Burkina Faso. In December 2018, Ansaroul Islam members attacked the Sono water and forest station in the Kossi Province and also attacked the water and forest post in Oudalan Province. Both of these Burkina Faso provinces are on the border with Mali. Moreover, there have also been attacks on people at watering holes in Burkina Faso by unnamed terror groups. For instance, in January 2019, eight people were killed due to an attack on a small watering hole by an unnamed terror group. The porous borders between the two countries make it potentially possible for terrorists groups from Burkina Faso, including Ansaroul Islam, to enter and carry out attacks on the water infrastructure in Mali.

Mali also launched the online water atlas in 2018 which provides details on water facilities in the country, including information on location, status and the local population dependent on the water facility. The atlas contains data collected between 2016 and 2018 by the Malian national inventory of water. Although the intention of the atlas is to monitor the water facilities in Mali and facilitate decision making by the concerned ministries on creating sustainable water infrastructure, it could potentially be used by armed non-state groups to accurately target the water infrastructure in Mali.



SOMALIA

Highlights

The Blue Peace Bulletin published in May 2019, titled “Water and Violence: Somalia”, provides a picture of the political situation in Somalia and details the effects of the presence of non-armed state actors on water resources and related infrastructure in the country. The government in Somalia has been relatively weak and the political situation is further complicated by two separatist movements, i.e. the quest for separate Somaliland and Puntland.

The Bulletin talks about the most prominent armed non-state actors in Somalia, Al-Shabaab. As of May 2019, Al-Shabaab had around 7000-9000 fighters in Somalia and was primarily based in central and southern Somalia. Aside from controlling multiple regions in Somalia and attacking civilians, shopping malls and hotels, Al-Shabaab has undertaken many attacks against water infrastructure in the country. The areas around the two transboundary rivers, namely Jubba and Shabeli/Shibeli, are strongholds of Al-Shabaab and the rivers have been used as a weapon of war by the terror group. Some instances of attacks on water infrastructure mentioned in the Bulletin include the 2017 incident where Al-Shabaab poisoned water wells which killed 32 people and the February 2019 incident in which Al-Shabaab captured El-Miraale, a water point situated in Puntland, from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). Water infrastructure in Somalia has also been attacked during the fighting between Ethiopians troops and Al- Shabaab. In 2017, Ethiopian troops reportedly attacked a water source used by Al- Shabaab in Somalia.

The United Nations operates the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia which includes the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). AMISOM comprised an estimated 22,000 troops from Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, and Sierra Leone as of March 2019. AMISOM has also assisted in rebuilding some of the water infrastructure attacked by Al-Shabaab. By October 2018, AMISOM had re-built 16 shallow wells in 8 villages, benefitting about twenty seven thousand people. These wells were previously poisoned by Al-Shabaab.



Updates

As of September 2019, Al-Shabaab still has a strong presence in Somalia. The group has been collecting taxes from local businesses, which earns them millions of dollars every year. Al-Shabaab is also attempting to form a parallel government in Somalia. It already held control over multiple un-governed rural areas, but has also been trying to gain control over Somalia's capital and attempting to undermine the legitimacy of the federal government. Al-Shabaab has a pattern of destroying water infrastructure in the areas under its control. If Al-Shabaab succeeds in taking over more regions, including the capital city of Mogadishu, it could prove to be an even bigger threat to the water resources in Somalia.

Additionally, the drought in the region coupled with the constant terror attacks have left around 5.4 million people in Somalia in need of humanitarian assistance, of which about 2.2 million require emergency food aid. Lack of access to clean water has also led to rise in water borne-diseases. There are also 2.6 million internally displaced people in the country, of which around 60,000 people have been displaced in 2019 alone due to the drought in the country. The UN humanitarian aid appealed for \$1.08 billion for humanitarian programmes in Somalia in 2019, making it one of largest crises in the world, but only 47% of the appeal has been funded so far.

However, the situation is not all bleak in Somalia. In September 2019, AMISOM launched an initiative to support families affected by drought in southern Somalia. The initiative is being undertaken by the AMISOM female troops along with their female counterparts in the Somali National Army (SNA) and Jubbaland state security forces. Furthermore, the African Development Bank (AfDB) has provided a grant of \$12 million for the construction of the Kismayo and Baidoa Urban Water Supply Project, which

was launched in mid-September 2019. The project is expected to increase access to safe water, improve sanitation and provide better water delivery services in Kismayo and in Baidoa. However, the project may be affected by recent terror activity in Kismayo. The city of Kismayo, located in southern Somalia, was under the control of Al-Shabaab until 2012 and remained relatively peaceful till July 2019, when an attack by Al-Shabaab on a hotel in Kismayo killed several people.

Future

Somalia is set to hold universal elections in 2020 for which public awareness campaigns have been launched to inform residents about the one-person, one-vote process. These elections are reportedly the first of its kind since the last universal vote held in 1969, which was shortly before the coup that brought military leader Siad Barre to power. AMISOM will be actively involved in ensuring that the 2020 elections go smoothly, including providing security on the voting day.

The 2020 elections could bring new hope to many parts of rural Somalia, which are currently mostly ungoverned and under the control of Al-Shabaab. The participation of the people in the voting process and choosing of the government could also help in renewing their faith in the government of Somalia. The newly appointed government of Somalia could formulate strategies for re-capturing the rural regions of Somalia from Al-Shabaab, especially regions around the Juba and Shabelle River and areas with major water structures. The new government could also hold talks with Ethiopia to re-start the Bardheere Dam in Somalia and negotiate with Ethiopia over their plans to build the Genale Dawa cascade on the Genale/Juba River in Ethiopia. Somalia had earlier protested to the construction of the the Genale Dawa cascade as it would harm Juba rivers flow.

However, fresh talks between the two countries could potentially re-start both water infrastructure projects. Another key development in Somalia is the “Somali Transition Plan”. The plan, which was endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council in April 2018, is a guide developed by the Somali government and its international partners on the transfer of security responsibility to the Somali security forces and the exit of AMISOM troops from Somalia by 2021. The exit of AMISOM will be a slow process with troops being pulled out in smaller numbers. In June 2019, the UN Security Council approved the removal of 1,000 AMISOM troops (bringing their number down to around 19,000 troops), despite a rise in attacks by Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu. This change in security responsibility could leave the future of Somalia unpredictable, especially with regard to Al-Shabaab’s activities. Al-Shabaab, which has been known to target water infrastructure and block access to water resources, could take advantage of the reduction in the troops during the transitional period to further carry out water-related attacks.



UKRAINE

Highlights

The Blue Peace Bulletin on Ukraine published in February 2019, delineates several attacks perpetrated by separatists and insurgents allegedly backed by Russia, on water infrastructure in the Donbass region of Eastern Ukraine, consisting of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

The Bulletin highlights how UNICEF determined the risk that contamination and/or cutting off of drinking water supply posed a risk to 750000 children and 3 million people in the area around the Line of Contact. Deaths of 10000 people, with 2800 of them being civilians were recorded in the fighting between the two factions, i.e., the Ukrainian government backed by the EU and the Eastern Ukrainian separatists of Russian ethnicity, backed by Russia. The armed conflict, which began in 2014, saw weaponization of water infrastructure and supply consistently till January 2019, a month before the bulletin was published. The bulletin comprises details of these in a comprehensive manner. Attacks were witnessed among other things, on pipelines, pumping stations, and even filtration stations with the associated risk of chlorine poisoning.

It further expounds on the various efforts undertaken jointly by OSCE, in the form of monitoring and trilateral meetings, along with Russia, Ukraine and representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. The Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) instituted in 2014, the Minsk 1, 2, and 3 agreements and their subsequent failure to contain the attacks on civilians as well as water infrastructure gives one an idea about the intractability of the conflict. As explained in the Bulletin, as many as 18 attempts have been undertaken by the TCG since 2014 to bring about meaningful ceasefires and *détentes*, which have been repeatedly violated by one or all parties involved in the conflict.

In the many recommendations listed out, emphasis was made on establishment of protected zones around the Line of Contact to ensure the safety of water installations that are under most amount of threat. It is imperative that water supply to the people remains undisrupted. In particular, the need for creation of protected zones enumerated by ICRC along with some others, confidence building measures, and attention to the humanitarian aspect of the conflict has been stressed.



Updates

In the first quarter of 2019, the attention of Ukrainians was concentrated mainly on the upcoming presidential elections, which were to be held in April 2019. Even so, a “Spring Ceasefire” was attempted on March 8 which was unsuccessful as firing from the Russian-backed separatists resumed just one day after its launch. It was notable though that an overall decrease in the number of reported security incidents was observed in March, with 29% fewer incidents compared to February. However, in spite an improvement of sorts, the water treatment stations frequently came under fire, which caused severe damage and interruption of water and electricity supplies.

During the last week of June, there were five separate, conflict-related incidents affecting water and sanitation facilities on Eastern Ukraine’s contact line, which divides Government and Non-Government Controlled Areas. In the early morning of 29th June, shrapnel from exploding shells damaged water pipelines near Horlivka, along the Siverski Donetsk-Donbass channel, which supplies water to more than 3 million people on both sides of the contact line. The same evening, night-shift workers at the First Lift Pumping Station near Vasylivka, Donetsk Region, had to run for their lives to the onsite bomb shelter to avoid shelling.

In March 2019 and April 2019, Ukrainian presidential elections were held in a two-round system. In the second round Volodymyr Zelenski, a non-establishment comedian and a political upstart defeated stalwart Petro Poroshenko by winning more than 73% of the votes. Lack of participation from the people in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions meant 12% of the eligible voters were precluded from the election process. However, one of his campaign promises has been to bring about a peaceful conclusion to the conflict in Donbass, therefore, his election and parliamentary success holds much promise for a possible peaceful end to the conflict.

On July 21, the Trilateral Contact Group comprising OSCE, Russia, Ukraine as well as representatives from Donetsk and Luhansk, announced a new agreement, declaring an unlimited ceasefire. In its aftermath of this agreement the attacks on water infrastructure have halted.

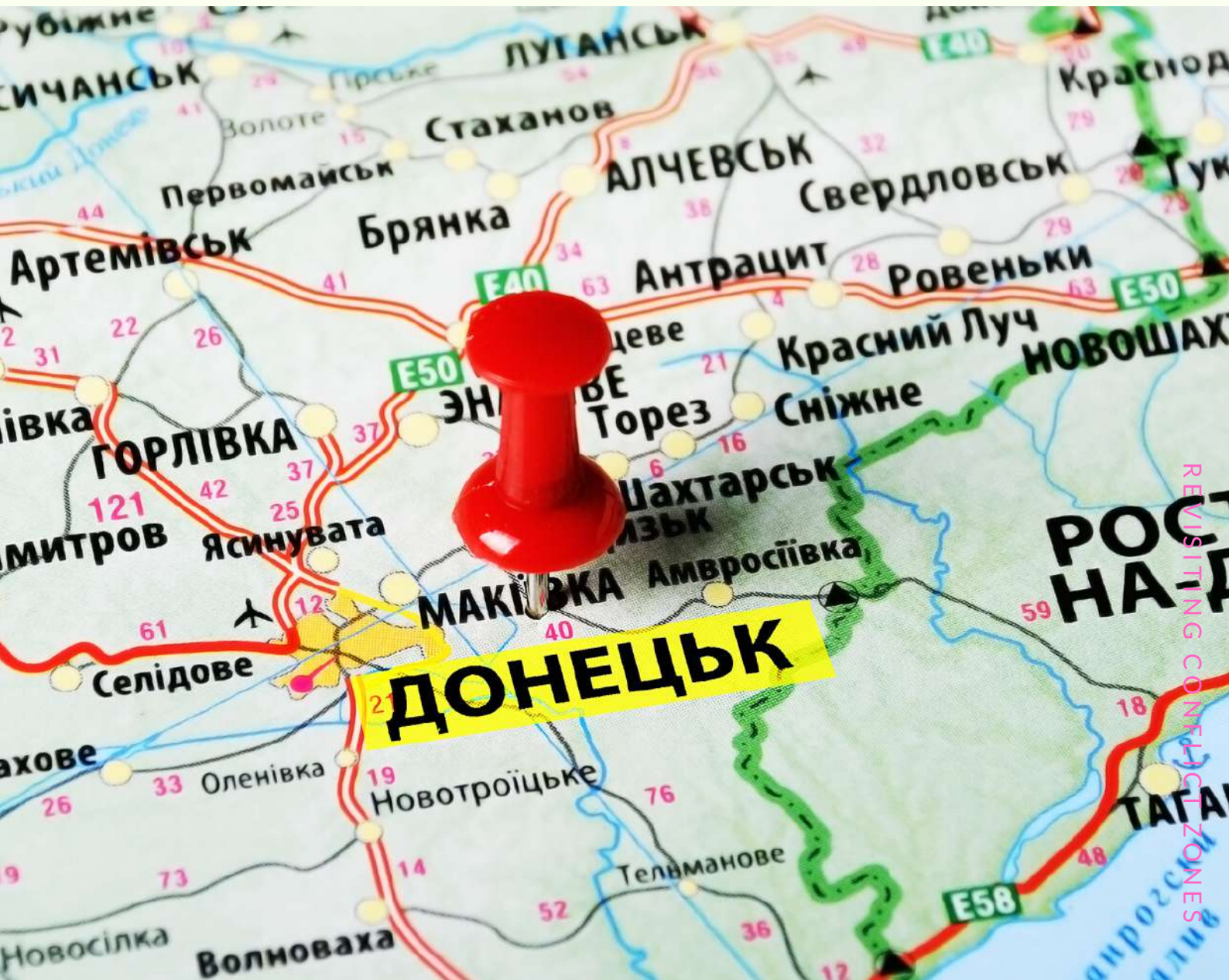
Future

Unabated attacks on water infrastructure have affected lives and halted water supply for 3.2 million people in 2019 alone, according to a report by UNICEF. Apart from paucity of running water, damage to sanitation facilities on account of the relentless fighting has occurred 60 times since the beginning of the year. The spike in communicable diseases due to consumption of contaminated and polluted water resulting from the destruction of sanitation infrastructure leading has added to the miseries of the people of Eastern Ukraine.

Emphasis has been laid by the various stakeholders on having a more humanitarian approach to end the war that continues to affect important water infrastructure. The region’s main water supply company, which provides drinking water and collective heating to 4 million people on both sides of the front line, faces difficulties. As many pipelines responsible for delivery of water to cities pass through separatist areas and frequently require repairs, workers get invariably exposed to firing and mines. To relieve some pressure on Voda Donbassa, France recently agreed to provide financial and technical support for a project for supply of drinking water and wastewater disposal to the city of Mariupol in Donetsk Oblast. The possibility of respite can exist if such collective humanitarian and political solutions can replace military ones.

The election of a non-establishment individual to the highest office with an overwhelming majority augurs well for the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. The general expectation is that Volodymyr Zelenski's novel ways and methods of governance could bring out an out of the box solution to the unyielding conflict. To add to this, President Putin's April 2019 decision to simplify the process of granting citizenship to the people of Donbass is also being perceived as a conciliatory approach by experts. All these factors in conjunction with the noteworthy absence of acrimony between the civilians on either side of the contact line make for a fertile ground for a peaceful settlement. In addition, in the wake of the unlimited ceasefire, direct and major attacks on water infrastructure have halted so far.

However, there are enough reasons to be pessimistic about conflict transformation and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The humanitarian situation with respect to water remains grave despite initiatives like shouldering the responsibility of providing financial assistance and technical know-how for a project that will supply of drinking water and wastewater disposal to the city of Mariupol, by France. According to UNICEF, its \$13.3 million USD appeal to provide emergency water and sanitation support in eastern Ukraine is 15 percent funded. UNICEF's total \$21 million USD appeal to respond to the humanitarian needs of children and their families in Eastern Ukraine is only 30 percent funded.



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