Maintaining status quo or realizing transformation in transboundary water conflicts? The power–interests–identity nexus in the Helmand river basin

Water International

Ghoreishi, Seyedeh Zahra; Mianabadi, Hojjat; Warner, Jeroen; Nagheeby, Mohsen; Vij, Sumit et al

https://doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2024.2352228

Water International

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rwin20

Maintaining status quo or realizing transformation in transboundary water conflicts? The power–interests–identity nexus in the Helmand river basin

Seyedeh Zahra Ghoreishi, Hojjat Mianabadi, Jeroen Warner, Mohsen Nagheeby, Sumit Vij, Atefeh Parvaresh Rizi, Milad Jafari & Atefe ArfaFathollahkhani

To cite this article: Seyedeh Zahra Ghoreishi, Hojjat Mianabadi, Jeroen Warner, Mohsen Nagheeby, Sumit Vij, Atefeh Parvaresh Rizi, Milad Jafari & Atefe ArfaFathollahkhani (2024) Maintaining status quo or realizing transformation in transboundary water conflicts? The power–interests–identity nexus in the Helmand river basin, Water International, 49:5, 664-689, DOI: 10.1080/02508060.2024.2352228

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2024.2352228

Published online: 05 Jun 2024.

WATER INTERNATIONAL
2024, VOL. 49, NO. 5, 664–689
https://doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2024.2352228

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Maintaining status quo or realizing transformation in transboundary water conflicts? The power–interests–identity nexus in the Helmand river basin

Seyedeh Zahra Ghoreishi[a], Hojjat Mianabadi[b], Jeroen Warner[c], Mohsen Nagheeby[d], Sumit Vij[c], Atefeh Parvaresh Rizi[e], Milad Jafari[b] and Atefe ArfaFathollahkhani[b]

[a]Responsible Innovation Lab, Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia; [b]Department of Water Engineering and Management, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran; [c]Sociology of Development & Change, Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen, The Netherlands; [d]Water Security and Sustainable Development Hub, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK; [e]Department of Irrigation & Reclamation Engineering, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the critical hydropolitics literature by introducing the power–interests–identity nexus framework and addresses how it shapes decisions and (re)actions to transform or maintain water conflicts. The framework is investigated using the Helmand/Hirmand river basin, shared by Afghanistan and Iran. It elucidates which factors led to the transformation of Iran–Afghanistan water conflicts and the signing of the 1973 Treaty, as well as the influential factors that have contributed to its maintenance in the 2020s. The results demonstrate using the framework provides comprehensive insight by identifying the influential latent factors of transboundary water arrangements.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 6 December 2022
Accepted 3 May 2024

KEYWORDS
Conflict transformation; power–interests–identity nexus; otherization; identity-formation; Afghanistan; Iran

Introduction

Conflict transformation is a complex, at times impossible process that involves changing a destructive situation into a constructive one (Galtung & Fischer, 2013; Lederach, 2003). It has been widely acknowledged as the preferred approach to gain a better understanding of the causes of conflict and has been employed in various contexts, including social (Bennett, 2019), human rights (Sellick, 2020), politics (Holland, 2022), environment (Martin et al., 2020) and hydropolitics (Delli Priscoli & Wolf, 2009; Nagheeby, 2021; Zeitoun et al., 2020, 2019). The transformative approach to conflict takes into account a wide range of influential latent factors that facilitate or hinder transformation. Among these factors, power (Dal, 2018; Marigat et al., 2017), interests (Wu, 2014) and identity (Galtung & Fischer, 2013; Lederach, 2003) of states have been frequently underscored as the most influential in orienting conflictive and cooperative interactions.

Rich empirical studies provide a global overview of conflict and cooperation events in transboundary water arrangements. For instance, Daoudy (2016) suggested a structure–identity nexus framework to determine foreign policy changes, specifically to

CONTACT Hojjat Mianabadi hmianabadi@modares.ac.ir

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

comprehend the interactions between Syria and Turkey. Moreover, power and interests are part of the power interplay framework, explaining non-decision-making processes, as discussed by Vij et al. (2020). However, the role of identity in transboundary water interactions is not sufficiently addressed in the power interplay framework when explaining non-decision-making. By recognizing the essential causal relationship between power, interests and identity for conflict transformation, this paper introduces the power–interests–identity nexus (PIIN) framework. This framework aims to enhance the understanding presented by Vij et al. (2020) in these areas. Therefore, the paper aims to address a fundamental question regarding water conflicts: how does the PIIN construct and shape the decisions and behaviours of states to either transform or maintain water conflicts?

The PIIN framework is applied to the case of the Helmand/Hirmand River Basin (HRB) shared between Iran and Afghanistan. The HRB offers a compelling case study of conflict transformation and maintaining the status quo caused by the PIIN of riparian and non-riparian states. Over this river basin, Iran and Afghanistan have had fluctuating hydropolitical interactions (Nagheeby & Warner, 2022), such as the conflict transformation in 1973, which was caused by imposed cooperation over signing the Helmand Treaty, or maintaining the status quo in the 2020s deliberately, which resulted in 'opportunitized' water conflict (Ghoreishi et al., 2021 after Warner, 2004). Drawing upon the PIIN, we intend to interpret the cause of states' behaviour, and recognize what influential latent factors have led to cooperation and conflict over the HRB. This understanding would illustrate how and why Iran and Afghanistan hydropolitical interactions have fluctuated over time and how the PIIN plays a role in shaping their interactions.

Thus, based on an interpretative research paradigm, the novelty of this study is twofold: (a) filling the literature gap by developing a framework to better understand the influence of the nexus between power, interests and identity factors on transboundary water conflicts, and (b) applying the developed framework to a case study.

The PIIN analysis framework

Power (Lukes, 2005) and interests (Morgenthau, 1962; Wendt, 1999)[1] play a critical role in making and resisting changes. Furthermore, Wendt (1999) argues that identity, as a reflection of selfhood in an interaction, is a prerequisite for interest because an actor cannot know its interests without first knowing who it is. In this vein, interest and identity also influence each other, as without interest, identity has no motivational power, and without identity, interest has no direction (Wendt, 1999). Moreover, the acknowledgement by Hayward (1998) that identity is formed and shaped by power dynamics reinforces the theoretical basis of this study.

Based on these explanations, the three components of power, interest and identity are considered crucial in shaping hydropolitical interactions. Therefore, the PIIN can be utilized to recognize influential latent factors in transboundary water arrangements. The framework[2] (Figure 1) takes into account variables that interact reciprocally. The interaction analysis in the framework involves four main steps: (1) describing the role of power in shaping the interactions; (2) demonstrating how interests and identity shape

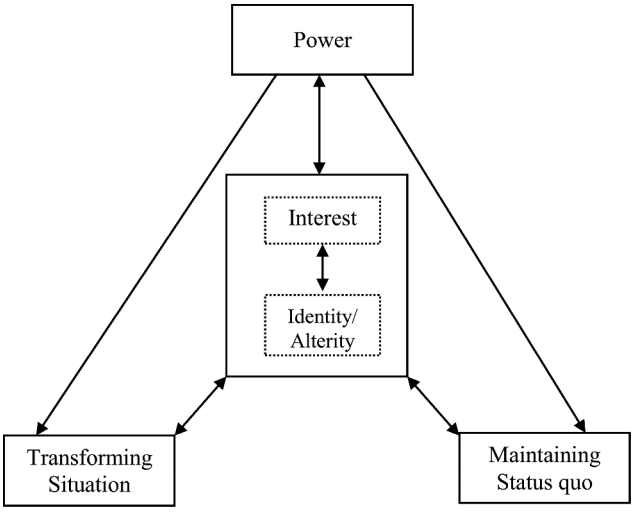

Figure 1. The PIIN framework.

power outcomes, and are shaped by power; (3) investigating different pathways to transforming or maintaining transboundary water arrangement; and (4) suggesting possible pathways for conflict transformation.

Power-shaping status quo and transformation

The concept of power has various meanings and interpretations. This research focuses on Lukes's (2005) coherent framework,[3] which considers three dimensions of power in international relations. According to the framework, the first dimension of power is A's ability to persuade B to do something that B would not otherwise do (Dahl, 1957). The second dimension of power was introduced by Bachrach and Baratz (1970), who claim that power is achieved by securing B's compliance through creating values (or interests) that limit the scope of the political process, controlling the rules of the game and setting the agendas. Finally, the third dimension of power, as defined by Lukes (2005), is when A secures B's compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires through influencing, shaping or determining their wants. Such control could be achieved through the control of information and the mass media (Lukes, 2005).

Accordingly, power has gained significant attention in hydropolitical literature and can be operationalized via three dimensions: material, agenda-setting and ideational (Zeitoun & Warner, 2006). The interaction between actors using various dimensions will be referred to as power interplay (Vij et al., 2020), which can either transform or maintain the status quo in hydropolitical water arrangements (Zeitoun et al., 2019).

Transforming the relational structure through the power interplay is a complex process that involves reframing relationships, interests and discourses (Miall, 2004), where parties may comply with the will of another party. Although the use of material power can be perceived as a mere threat and hinders transformational change (Ramsbotham et al., 2011), sometimes the combination of power dimensions can effectively transform water conflicts. For instance, power interplay makes it possible for

riparians to engage in long-term constructive change processes, leading to mutually accepted solutions, persuasion through bargaining, and offering attractive compromises (Ramsbotham et al., 2011). Therefore, the transformation of water conflicts could result from power interplay in the transboundary water arrangement by using different tactics and strategies to improve agenda-setting power (Zeitoun et al., 2017).

On the contrary, maintaining the status quo refers to a situation where there is no interest in changing the rules of the game, and efforts are made to resist changes (Wendt, 1999). For instance, this can be achieved through a non-decision-making approach (Vij et al., 2020). Bachrach and Baratz (1963) stated that a non-decision-making situation arises when the dominant values, accepted rules of the game, existing power relations among groups, and instruments of force, either individually or in combination, effectively prevent specific grievances from developing into full-fledged issues that require decisions. Moreover, Vij et al. (2020) argued that the scope of decision-making can be intentionally limited by manipulating ideas. Maintaining conflict is not only achieved through non-decision-making or manipulations but also through power interplay that may resist change processes. Power interplay to maintain the status quo may result in no concrete decisions being made among riparians, whether material, agenda-setting, or ideational power is utilized (Vij et al., 2020). However, Menga (2014) explained that ideational power (for instance, sanctioned discourses) seems to be the most significant in maintaining the status quo, as it may legitimize and stabilize the existing water arrangement while also preventing the riparians from entering the contest.

Interests and identity-shaping power outcomes are shaped by power

Apart from power, interest[4] is also a significant factor that shapes decisions and actions in international relations (Morgenthau, 1962; Wendt, 1999). The state's interests determine whether to maintain the status quo or bring about constructive change and transformation in an interaction (Wendt, 1999). Furthermore, as stated before, interests are produced by identities, but then, identities are chosen because of certain interests or values. Thus, interest and identity are interrelated.

Moreover, understanding power relations can reveal the process of interests and identity formation. Mainly because power is not merely responding to preferences, desires and ideas, it also shapes them. One form of identity that power can shape is an 'otherized' one. Otherization is an act of identity formation and alterity,[5] which makes a group appear different and incompatible with others (Czarniawska, 2008) through the exercise of power. Deliberate otherization can be carried out by expressing negative information about others, de-emphasizing positive information about them, and creating negative other-presentation (Van Dijk, 1998). The processes of otherization foster the possibility of conflicting interests, resulting in polarized interactions that may lead to undesired situations.

In transboundary water settings, the rationale for constructing alterity and identity may be linked to the rise of water nationalism (Menga, 2016). Riparians may try otherizing identities by utilizing shared water resources to strengthen their nation-state, fulfilling socioeconomic needs and achieving political stability. Therefore, it can be argued that controlling water through various dimensions of power may be a turning point for implementing otherization in water conflict settings and shaping interests.

Investigating the PIIN pathways

After discussing how power, interests and identity shape decisions and actions to either transform or maintain water conflicts, this section will delve into the various approaches that riparian states opt for to safeguard their needs.[6] Figure 1 demonstrates different pathways that riparian states would have in their interactions and Table 1 shows why riparian states choose different pathways (shown in Figure 1) in their transboundary water arrangements based on their needs. For further elaboration, Table 1 has been developed based on Wendt (1999), who held that identities have varying embedded needs, and thus, there could be diverse interests to satisfy them. Accordingly, actions and decisions over shared waters are interrelated with interests and identities that are shaped by various needs.

For more explanation, in transboundary river basins, each country has its distinct ideological and material needs that influence its identity and specific interests, or vice versa. The needs in transboundary water arrangements may differ from water-box, out-of-the-water-box or security needs. The water-box needs include agriculture, hydropower production, fisheries and so on. These needs generate interest in water-diverting projects, protecting water quantity or quality and establishing a selfish identity. These water-box needs can be met by mobilizing material powers like hydraulic missions (major infrastructural works),[7] involving third parties or getting international support.

The needs that fall outside the realm of water but are represented to be dependent on water can be classified into two categories: sociopolitical and socioeconomic. The former need includes the need for intensifying patriotism or nationalism, which fosters an interest in nation-state building, gaining power or balancing power. On the other hand, the latter need pertains to access to transportation or importing energy, which should be provided by the other riparian states due to their geopolitical or geoeconomic interdependencies. Fulfilling these out-of-the-water-box needs and the interest in acquiring them may lead to dependency and the construction of a cooperative identity among the riparian states. These needs can be met by utilizing material, agenda-setting, ideational powers and issue-linkage strategy.

Table 1. Needs for pursuing different pathways in the PIIN framework.

		Mostly relevant forms of power interplay		
Need		interplay	Interests	Identity
Water-box	Agriculture, Hydropower, Fisheries, etc.	Material	Such as controlling water quantity, protecting water quality, etc.	Selfish
Out-of-the-water-box	*Socio-Political Needs* Patriotism, Nationalism, etc.	Material and ideational	Such as gaining power, balancing power, nation-state building, etc.	Otherized
	Socioeconomic Needs Energy, gas, oil, transportation, transit, etc.	Agenda-setting	Gaining out-of-water-box interests in hydropolitical interactions	Cooperative
Security (Positive and Negative)	Water for nature	Agenda-setting and ideational	Using water in a sustainable, equitable, and peaceful way for both people and the ecosystem	Collective

Furthermore, if there is a need for security,[8] both negative and positive, for states, individuals, and the ecosystem, then there is an interest in utilizing water in a sustainable, equitable, and peaceful manner benefiting both people and the ecosystem (Ghoreishi et al., 2023). This approach can promote a collective identity among riparian states. The effective use of agenda-setting and ideational powers can be crucial in fulfilling the need for security in a transboundary river basin.

How to transform an otherized relationship

Wendt (1999) outlines four factors that can drive transformation and shape collective identity in interactions: interdependence, common fate, homogenization and self-restraint. Interdependence refers to the idea that states are not isolated entities but rather interconnected and reliant on each other (Keohane & Nye, 1987, 2001). Furthermore, the presence of a common threat from a third party can lead to mutual assistance and the development of a more cooperative and less militaristic self-perception (Campbell, 2007). Additionally, the process of homogenization, or making things uniform or similar, can contribute to the formation of shared values and beliefs among states, further strengthening their collective identity (Wendt, 1999). Moreover, self-restraint is a crucial factor in the formation of a collective identity. In the context of international relations, exercising self-restraint can promote a more cooperative and less militaristic approach among states (Wendt, 1999).

To transform a hydropolitical water relationship that has been otherized, we believe it is necessary to focus on the interests and identities of riparian states concerning transboundary river basins. By aligning interests and developing a shared understanding of socioeconomic and sociopolitical needs, riparian states can foster constructive relationships and reframe their otherized identities. Cooperative interactions among riparian states encourage the collective recognition of self and others (Hasenclever et al., 1996), inspiring a common identity among disputants. Therefore, riparians engaged in a conflict-prone interaction could become habituated to cooperation and, as a result, develop more collective identities (Wendt, 1994). Ultimately, the interplay of cooperation and identity formation can lead to the transformation of conflicts (Hasenclever et al., 1996).

Methods and materials

Data collection

This research utilized the sources available in the library. The investigation of these sources resulted in a better understanding of the historical hydropolitical interactions among the riparian states. Consequently, secondary sources such as policy papers, action plans, strategic planning documents, publicly available reports, academic literature, news articles and headlines, were used for collecting data. These sources included international, Afghan (in Pashto, Dari and English) and Iranian (in Farsi and English) reports from the past few decades.

Besides, from 2018 to 2022, 20 interviews (Table 2) were conducted with hydrological, geopolitical and political experts, influential academicians, retired foreign service

Table 2. Information about the interviewees, their professional background, and location.

No. of interviewees	Professional background	Location
3	Government official	Tehran, Iran
2		Kabul, Afghanistan
4	Academic	Tehran, Iran
2		Zabol, Iran
3		Kabul, Afghanistan
1		London, England
4	Technical expert (think-tank)	Tehran, Iran
1		Mashhad, Iran
1	Businessman	Zaranj, Afghanistan

officials, as well as retired water bureaucrats who had experience with HRB issues. The interviews were conducted in various ways, including in-person, phone and Skype.

By employing a combination of data-collection methods, we circumvented the potential bias of interviewee perspectives. This approach enabled us to maintain a neutral stance while assessing and interpreting the research outcomes.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis is employed to decode the data collected on the intersection of power, interest and identity in the Helmand water conflict. Thematic analysis is a method that identifies, scrutinizes and reports patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A *theme* is a patterned meaning extracted from the data that informs the research question (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). We took four phases for theme development: (i) initialization; (ii) construction; (iii) rectification; and (iv) finalization.

During the initialization phase, materials were collected to comprehend the primary issues in water arrangements of Iran and Afghanistan by reading and rereading transcripts. This initial understanding led to focusing on the essential constructs in the investigated data. In this step, data and notes were transcribed to describe the trend of perspectives. In the construction phase, codes were constructed and organized into clusters to compare similarities and differences, assigning each cluster a place for research questions and aims. The codes were constructed using five stages: (1) classification of adopted codes from the data; (2) revision and connecting to delineate themes; (3) sorting and labelling codes into piles of similar meanings to make leading developing ideas sensitive; (4) translating the Pashto, Farsi and Dari transcripts into English; and (5) describing the connections between various themes and demonstrate the influential factors and power interplay fluctuating the HRB interactions during the 1970s and 2020s. The construction steps led the thematic analysis to the verge of development in rectification. Finalization of theme development involves describing the themes and connecting them following the research questions presented in the results.

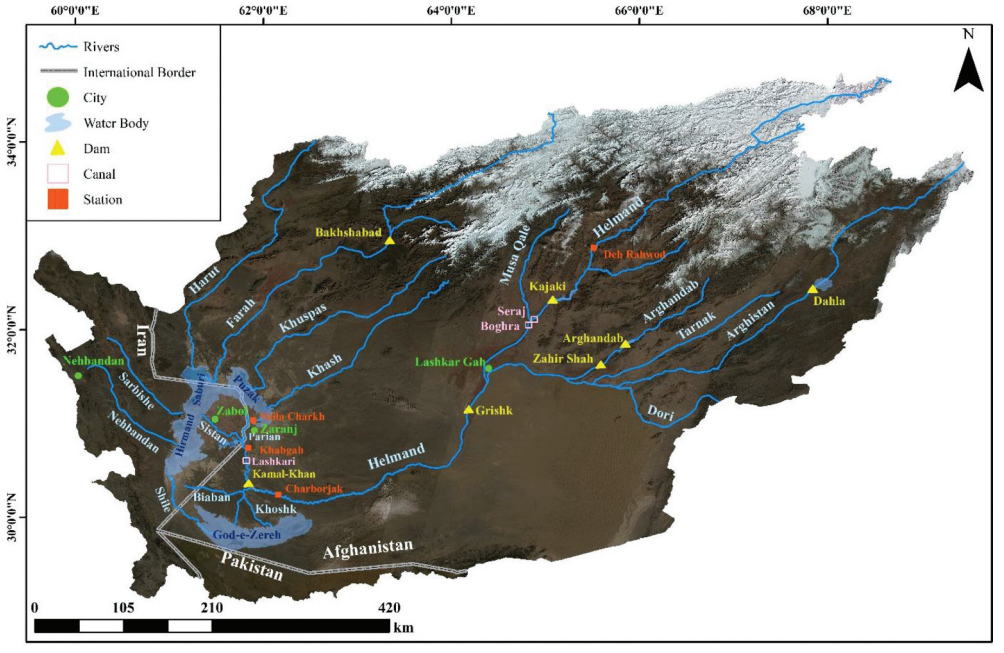

Figure 2. The Helmand River Basin.

Study area: the Helmand River Basin

The HRB is of strategic importance for both Afghanistan and Iran (Figure 2). It is the most extensive basin in Afghanistan, covering approximately 45% of its territory. While the HRB supports agricultural livelihoods in Afghanistan, it is the only source of water for people in the Iranian part and supplies 96% of the agroecological and ecosystem water demand in the Sistan Delta, which is the drainage point in Iran (Thomas & Mahmoudzadeh Varzi, 2015). The basin has an estimated average surface water availability of 9552 million cubic metres (MCM), with Afghanistan committing to delivering 26 m^3/s (820 MCM per year) to Iran, as per the 1973 Treaty.

The HRB's drainage system comprises several major rivers that originate in Afghanistan and flow into Iran, ultimately draining into the Sistan Delta before reaching Hamoun wetlands located at the border. During floods, the Hamoun wetlands merge to form a single large lake, and in such situation, water would naturally flow to the Goud-e-Zereh in Afghanistan via the Shileh River (Figure 3). However, the Kamal-Khan, as a diversion dam, in Afghanistan can divert the whole flow of water of the Helmand River to the Goud-e-Zereh and Kamal-Khan's main canals (consisting of Tarko and Qaleh-Afzal canals), thereby preventing water from reaching the Transboundary Hamoun wetlands (Figure 4).

Results

This section presents the results of the PIIN framework concerning the hydropolitical interaction between Iran and Afghanistan during two distinct periods: 1950–1973 and

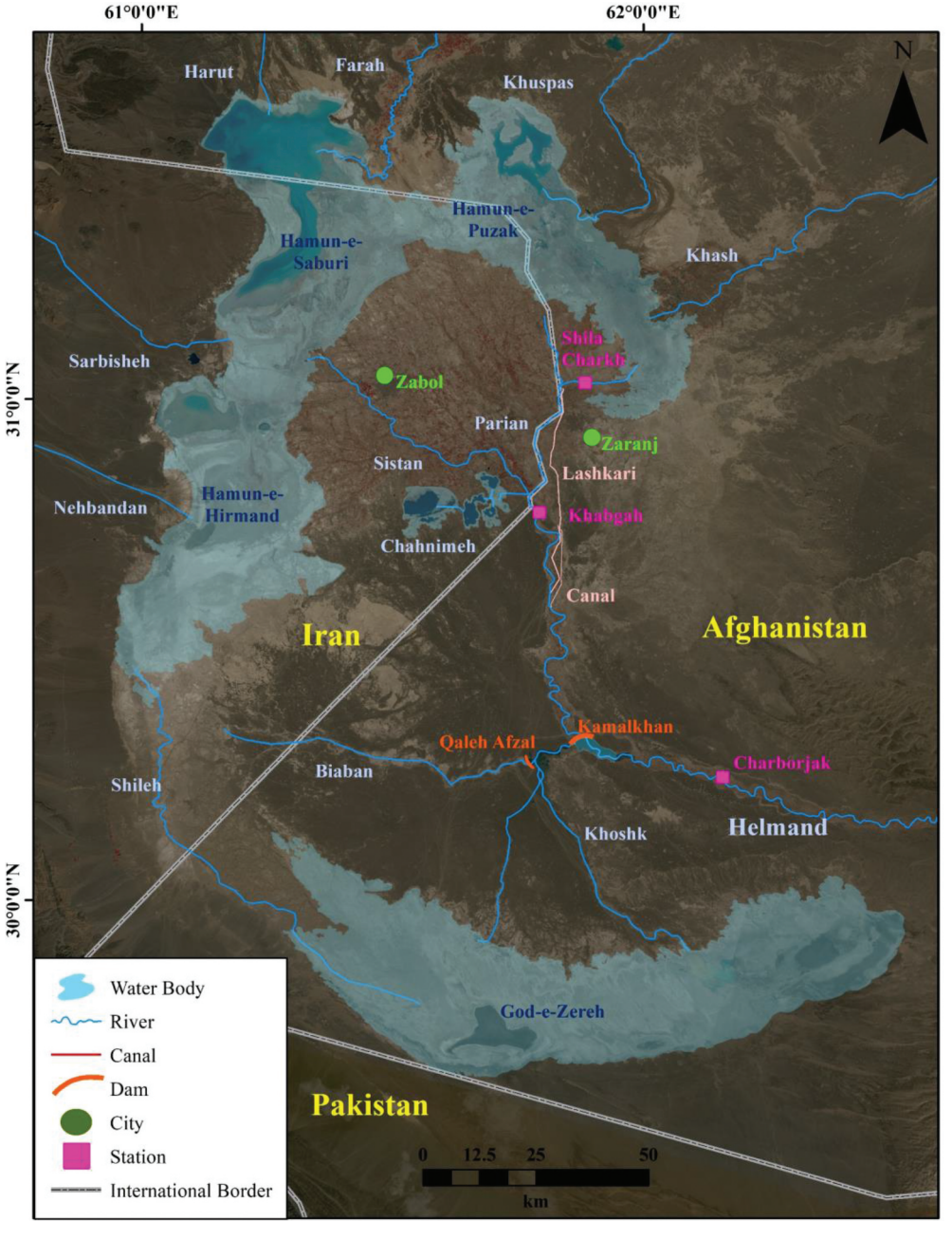

Figure 3. The downstream of the Kamal-Khan dam.

2014–2021. The reason for selecting these two periods is twofold. First, from 1950 to 1973, the interaction between Iran and Afghanistan resulted in the establishment of the 1973 Treaty, which transformed their water conflict. Second, from 2014 to August 2021, Afghanistan assumed its state-building was completed and considered water as a useful

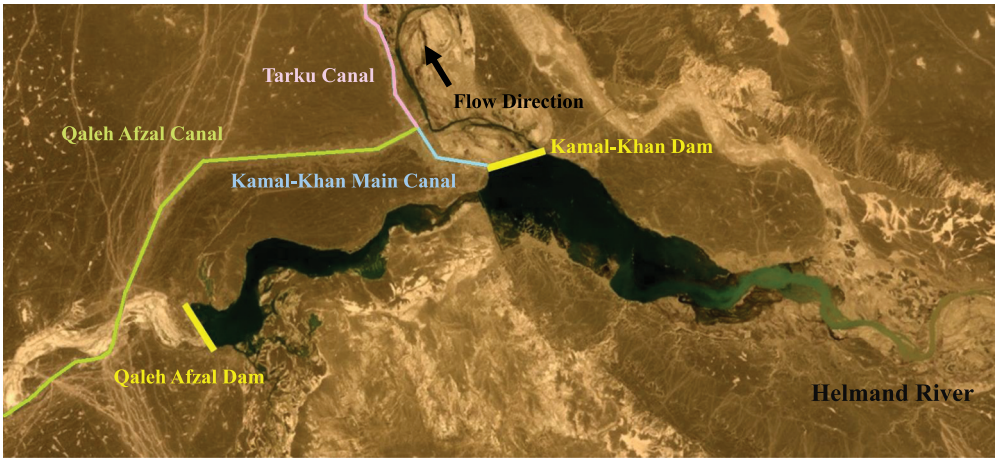

Figure 4. The Kamal-Khan dam's canals.

tool for its nation-building; thus, identity formation played a crucial role for Afghanistan's state.

The PIIN analysis of the 1970s arrangements: 1950–1973

As the 1973 Treaty remains the only water treaty that Afghanistan has ratified with its neighbouring countries, it is crucial to scrutinize the reasons that led Iran and Afghanistan to sign the Treaty, despite the underlying conflict. This analysis delves into the factors that facilitated compliance and the interplay of power that motivated both countries to sign the Treaty.

The role of material power in shaping interests and constructing identities in the 1970s

In the early 1950s, the USA provided significant financial assistance grants to Afghanistan for its hydraulic mission to protect its security against the Soviet Union's threat in the region. After the establishment of the US-funded Helmand Valley Authority in the 1950s and the initiation of Afghanistan's hydraulic missions, several dams and canals were constructed upstream of the HRB, leading to significant agricultural development in Afghanistan. However, this caused a reduction in flowing water into Iran (Whitney, 2006), resulting in the Helmand water conflict. The undesired quantity of flowing water from the Helmand River, caused by upstream construction, made Iran complain to the United Nations Security Council in 1947. Because the HRB conflict threatened the US policy[9] in the region, the USA dissuaded Iran from complaining and suggested an arbitration, which resulted in the formation of the Helmand River Delta Commission. The Helmand River Delta Commission awards in 1951 were conducted to supply Iran with an average of 22 m^3/s (694 MCM per year) from the Helmand River. Iran rejected the awards, leading to the perpetuation of the Helmand water conflict.

Thus, the interventions of the outsiders, where they provided fund for the hydraulic mission in upstream of the HRB have disrupted the process of constructing common

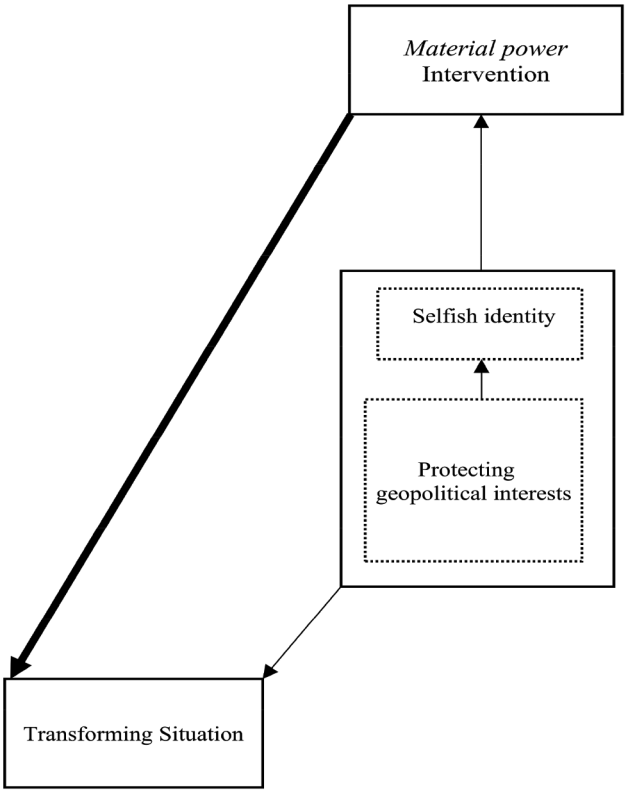

Figure 5. Outsiders' pathway in the PIIN framework in the 1970s.

interests and collective identity between Iran and Afghanistan (Nagheeby, 2021). Therefore, the outsiders who intervened in the HRB-related interests and identities of Iran and Afghanistan for their own broader geopolitical interests are the first factor that motivated the riparian countries to conduct a treaty (Figure 5).

Besides, during the 1960s and 1970s, with the establishment of the Central Treaty Organization, Iran grew closer to the US. Consequently, the USA withdrew the Helmand Valley projects and reduced financial and technical support from Afghanistan (Azam, 1999). For instance, Afghanistan's relationship with Morrison-Knudsen, an American construction firm responsible for the Helmand Valley projects, was terminated in 1959 (Ahlers et al., 2014). As a result, Afghanistan faced an emerging need for alternative funds to complete its hydraulic mission projects. Despite its reluctance, the desire for funds[10] was one of the factors that drove Afghanistan to sign a treaty with Iran and construct a cooperative identity (Figure 6).

On the other hand, during that period, Afghanistan's Prime Minister, Mohammad Musa Shafiq, was keen on forging closer ties with the West. As Iran was a staunch ally of the West and the USA, Afghanistan sought to align itself more closely with Iran to attract the attention of the West. Consequently, Afghanistan's interest in building stronger ties with the West facilitated the establishment of a cooperative identity in HRB relations (Figure 6).

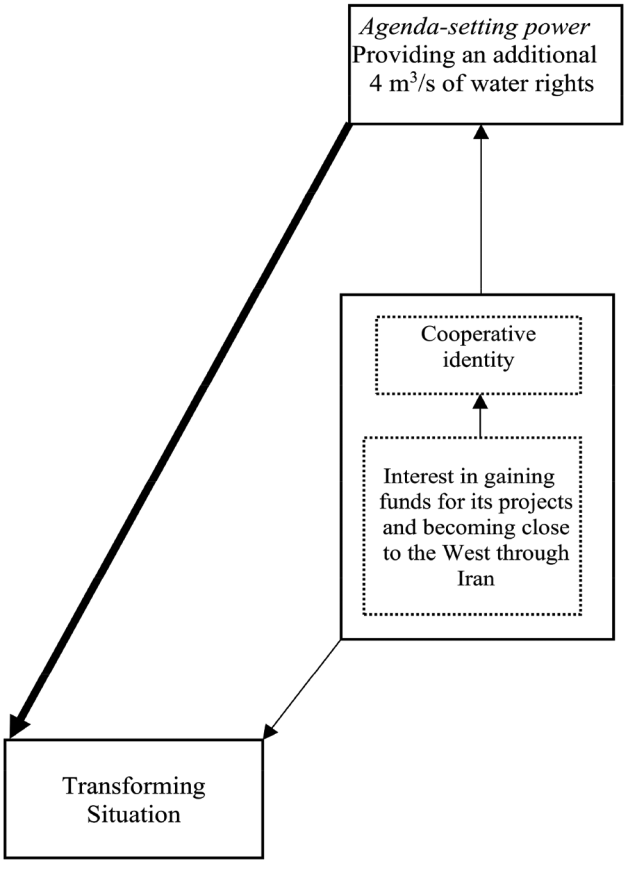

Figure 6. Afghanistan's pathway in the PIIN framework in the 1970s.

In summary, material powers such as outsiders' intervention, pursuing hydraulic missions, getting international support and growing closer to the West shaped interests in conducting a treaty over HRB and constructed cooperative identities for the riparian states.

The role of interests in constructing identity by agenda-setting power in the 1970s

In the early 1970s Iran was particularly interested in conducting a treaty with Afghanistan to secure its drinking and irrigation water rights from the HRB, an interest intensified by the hydrological dry year caused by the 1970–71 drought (Ahlers et al., 2014; Thomas & Mahmoudzadeh Varzi, 2015). The drought resulted in serious grievances among the Iranian Sistan farmers, who were forced to relocate due to its impacts. As a result of the drought, inhabitants of Sistan migrated to the northern provinces of Iran and even left the county for Afghanistan and Pakistan (Hafeznia et al., 2006). Therefore, Iran's interest in achieving guaranteed drinking and irrigation water rights prompted it to conduct the 1973 Treaty and adopt a cooperative identity (Figure 7).

The other reason for conducting the 1973 Treaty was Afghanistan's outside the realm of water needs and its interest in accessing the seaport. Being a landlocked

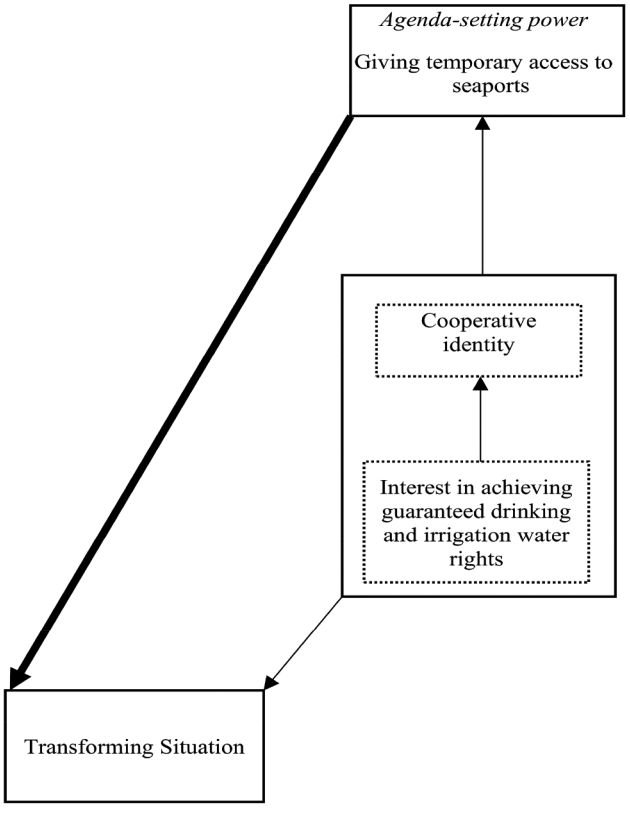

Figure 7. Iran's pathway in the PIIN framework in the 1970s.

country, Afghanistan is heavily reliant on maritime transport, which is critical for its economic development. For years, Afghanistan's primary access to international markets was the Karachi seaport in Pakistan. However, interactions were unfavourable for Afghanistan, leaving them in an extremely vulnerable position where Pakistan frequently closed its borders or restricted goods transportation (Kachiar, 2019). Thus, uncertainties in accessing the seaports of Pakistan motivated Afghanistan to find an alternative trade route to reduce its transportation dependency on Pakistan, so they were interested in accessing the Iranian seaports. In his diaries in 1969 Asadollah Alam, the Prime Minister of Iran (1962–64), noted that Afghanistan had offered to provide more water than determined by the 1951 Helmand River Delta Commission if Iran granted Afghanistan facilitated access to the Bandar Abbas seaports (Alam, 1992). This offer prompted Afghanistan to use its agenda-setting power, proposing a treaty on shared waters with Iran, and adding a surplus[11] of 4 m^3/s to the average 22 m^3/s water rights conducted by the 1951 Helmand River Delta Commission (Figure 6).

The PIIN in the 1970s

To conclude, the riparian countries' interdependent needs had given them agenda-setting power (gaining compliance by matching interests) during the HRB conflict

process in the 1970s. This eventually led Iran and Afghanistan to establish a cooperative identity within the 1973 Treaty. By creating shared interests and a cooperative identity, the actors transformed their conflict-prone interactions into a cooperation-known situation in the 1970s.

PIIN analysis in the 2020s status quo: 2014–2020

Despite the 1973 Treaty, conflicts over the HRB have persisted in the 2020s, primarily due to issues such as the lack of provision of Iran's drinking and irrigation legal rights as well as environmental water rights. According to the 1973 Treaty, Iran's water rights account for only 14% of the Helmand River flow, and the water rights of the Hamoun wetlands were not considered (Thomas & Mahmoudzadeh Varzi, 2015). The neglect of the water rights of the Hamouns[12] can be traced back to the 1951 Helmand River Delta Commission awards (see above), which considered water flowing into the Hamoun wetlands as 'waste' (HRDC, 1951, para. 161). Apart from the controversy over the Hamoun wetlands' water rights, there are other contentious issues between Iran and Afghanistan, such as monitoring the implementation of the 1973 Treaty, data-sharing and a lack of mutual trust. Dealing with these issues is influenced by PIIN components.

The role of interests in constructing identity by agenda-setting power in the 2020s

Since 2004, Iran and Afghanistan have been engaged in the Helmand River Commission, holding 27 meetings until 2024. However, no constructive results have been achieved thus far. During these meetings, Iran, being a downstream country, was interested in implementing the 1973 Treaty and bargaining over water rights for the Hamouns (Figure 8). Conversely, Afghanistan, being an upstream country, pursued a unilateral resource capture strategy, leading to the stalling of negotiations (Thomas et al., 2016; Figure 9).

The first reason that Afghanistan adopted a non-decision-making strategy was outsiders' interest in maintaining the Helmand conflict. In this vein, Malyar (2016) claims that Afghanistan was not allowed to resolve its water issue with neighbouring states and blamed the international community, particularly the USA, for intervening in the conflict (Figure 9). The second reason that Afghanistan delayed decision-making on implementing the 1973 Treaty is to buy time to complete its hydraulic mission projects. Besides, the existence of the 1973 Treaty has attracted considerable financial and technical support for Helmand Valley projects in Afghanistan from many Western countries.[13] By not implementing the 1973 Treaty and completing dams and canals (as shown in Figures 4 and 10), Afghanistan could have more power to decide about the HRB in the future.

The necessity of nation-state building through water is the third reason for maintaining the status quo and avoiding a decision in Afghanistan because the country faces difficulties in creating a collective national identity due to several rival ethnicities. To tackle this issue, the former president of Afghanistan (2014–21), Ashraf Ghani, attempted to use water as a tool for nation-building. Ghani aimed to utilize water resources to foster a sense of national identity, social solidarity, patriotism and unity while simultaneously creating a sense of otherization between Afghans and Iranians. In other words, Ghani had rebranded the cultural values of water to otherize 'us' (as Afghans) and 'the other' (Iranian). In this regard, Ghani delivered speeches with nationalist rhetoric and populist

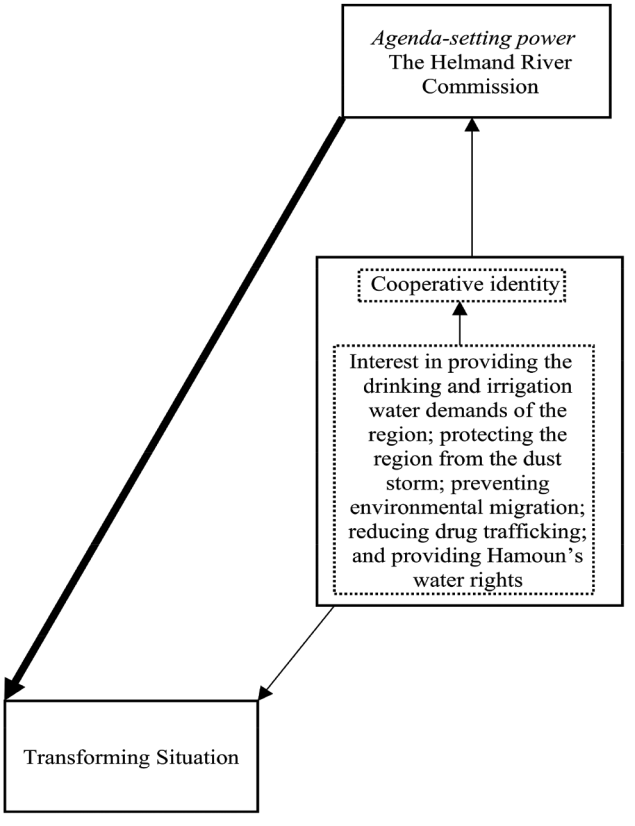

Figure 8. Iran's pathway in the PIIN framework in the 2020s.

slogans, particularly regarding the Helmand River, whipping up Afghan patriotism and constructing an otherized identity with Iran. For instance, in 2017, Ghani stated that 'water is our dignity and maintaining our dignity is our national goal', also emphasizing that 'we must preserve our reputation' (TOLOnews, 2021). Moreover, some Afghan politicians, including Khan Mohammad Takal, the former Minister of Energy and Water in Afghanistan, believes that releasing the Helmand River's water would bring disrepute and disgrace to Afghan history (Takal, 2022b). In 2022, Takal made a statement to the Taliban, saying that 'releasing water to Iran would be considered a betrayal to Afghanistan' (Takal, 2022a). Thus, Afghan politicians stalled the water negotiations over the Helmand River and constructed[14] water as a sensitive issue in Afghanistan like Afghan's identity[15] (Figure 9).

The fourth reason that Ghani's attempted to delay HRB's effective water interactions with Iran was his interest to become closer to the USA. In this vein, Ghani was interested in using water as a means to establish a friendship with the USA, whose relationship with Iran has been characterized by cycles of hostility. This was achieved by creating a sense of a 'common other'[16] with Iran, especially when Iran was engaged in political conflict with the West,[17] because states that share enemies are likely to become allies (Maoz et al., 2007). Therefore, pro-Western desires initiated the use of water against Iran in

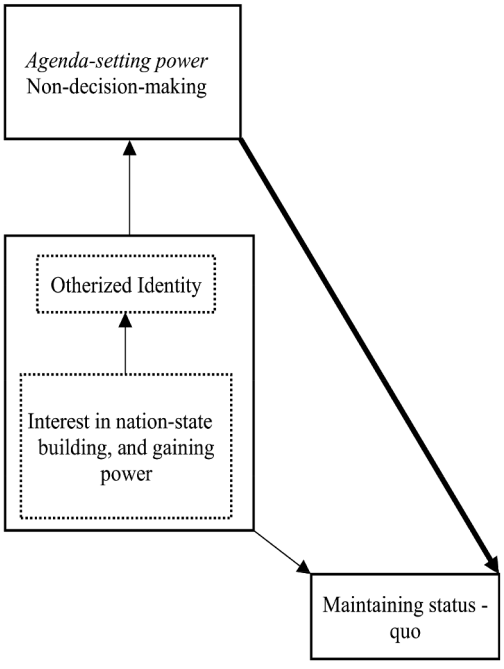

Figure 9. Afghanistan's pathway in the PIIN framework in the 2020s.

Afghanistan, benefiting from the West. Consequently, the geopolitical interests constructed an otherized identity in the HRB between Iran and Afghanistan (Figure 9).

According to the PIIN framework, Afghanistan's interests in nation-state building and controlling water constructed an otherized identity for it over the HRB. To maintain this interest, Afghanistan attended Helmand River Commission meetings without the political will to confront the problems, emphasizing the technical aspects of the issue, although the problem had become political and identity-based. As a result, there was an interplay of agenda-setting power and a limitation of the political process in the HRB (Figure 9).

The role of interests in constructing identity by ideational power in the 2020s

According to the PIIN framework, Ghani's government's interest in building controlling water infrastructures, water nationalism and absorbing the USA's attention constituted a need for a negative other-presentation with Iran. To pursue this interest, ideational power and sanctioned discourses approach were utilized (Figure 10). These research findings illustrate four main themes of sanctioned discourses utilized for acquiring ideational power in the HRB hydropolitical interactions:

Naturalizing the reduction of water by climate change. Afghanistan's ideational power is exemplified by its ability to influence negotiation processes through the sanctioning of discourses regarding changes in water availability. In recent years, Afghanistan's shortage of water flowing downstream has been attributed to reduced precipitation and climate

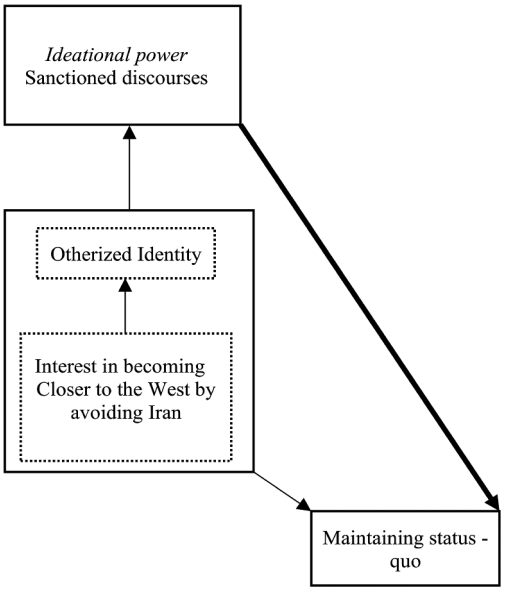

Figure 10. Afghanistan's pathway in the PIIN framework in the 2020s.

change in the HRB. For instance, in June 2018, the Afghan ambassador to Tehran, Nasir Ahmad Nour, asserted that Afghanistan was complying with the agreement and there were no issues with Iran; the main challenge was reduced rainfall and climate change[18] (Lane, 2020). However, studies challenged such claims, even arguing that the HRB flow average increased from 5.9 to 6.3 BCM in the post-treaty environment (1973–2012; HajiHosseini et al., 2020; Mianabadi et al., 2020). For instance, HajiHosseini et al. (2020) demonstrate that climate variabilities had a small impact on the discharge of the Helmand River (about 2%). However, the evapotranspiration per hectare underwent a drastic change due to the expansion of the double cropping area in the Helmand Basin (HajiHosseini et al., 2020). Hence, it can be argued that human activities bear greater responsibility for water scarcity than climatic factors.

It has been claimed that upon the completion of the Tarko and Qala Afzal canals (Figure 4), which divert water from the Kamal Khan Dam, 49.397 hectares of currently uncultivated land will be irrigated in the Nimruz province, Afghanistan. However, if climate change is the primary contributor to water scarcity in Afghanistan, it raises the question of how Afghanistan plans to develop irrigation in Nimruz (MEW, 2021).

Sanctioning of scales: Helmand is not a 'subnational' river basin. Given its geographical attributes, Afghanistan is motivated to consider the HRB as a subnational river basin. With 80% of the HRB located within its borders, Afghanistan presumes that it has the legitimate right to utilize the water for its own interests. For instance, McMahon, the first arbitrator to deal with the water conflict between Iran and Afghanistan, noted that the Afghan government refused to accept the water dispute because they considered the Helmand River an internal river (McMahon, 1904, para. 3).

With this nationalistic perception of the ownership of the HRB, Afghanistan has proposed to exchange oil for the HRB water. For instance, President Ghani claimed that Iran should transfer oil to pay for extra water from the Helmand River. During the inauguration of the Kamal-Khan Dam, he stated that 'If you [Iran] give us oil, you can then ask for (more) water or give us something in return', insisting that Afghanistan 'will not provide free water to anyone' (TOLOnews, 2021). By analysing the speeches, it is evident that the presumption that the HRB is national is the main factor behind this approach. This perception has led to the utilization of transboundary waters as upstream power tools, commodity exchange and the pursuit of selfish identity.

Afghanistan claims not to utilize the HRB's water due to the war. Afghan officials reiterate that the country has thus far failed to control its waters (Rasooly, 2020) and that its waters are flowing downstream towards riparian countries such as Iran, Pakistan and Central Asian countries due to Afghanistan's ongoing war. Despite the significant hindrance caused by the war in development plans by the central governments, it is worth noting that irrigation lands (HajiHosseini et al., 2020) and water withdrawals have been massively extended (Figures 11 and 12), resulting in the prevention of water flows towards the Iranian border.

In order to show the huge usage of the Helmand water in Afghanistan, Figures 4, 11, and 12 are presented. First, as shown in Figure 4, the Kamal-Khan dam and canal, as water-diversion structures, can divert the whole of the water of the Helmand River to the Goud-e-Zereh. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 11, between the upstream of the Kamal-Khan dam and downstream of the Lashkar Gah, where the two significant rivers of the Helmand Basin converge, there exist numerous infrastructures. However, the most crucial ones are the 30

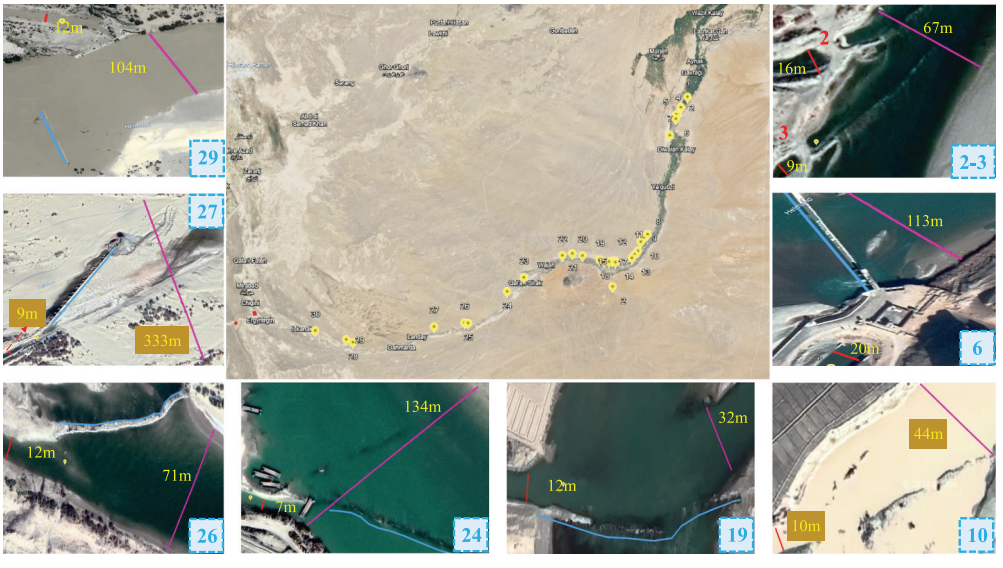

Figure 11. Afghanistan's canals upstream of Kamal-Khan dam.[19]

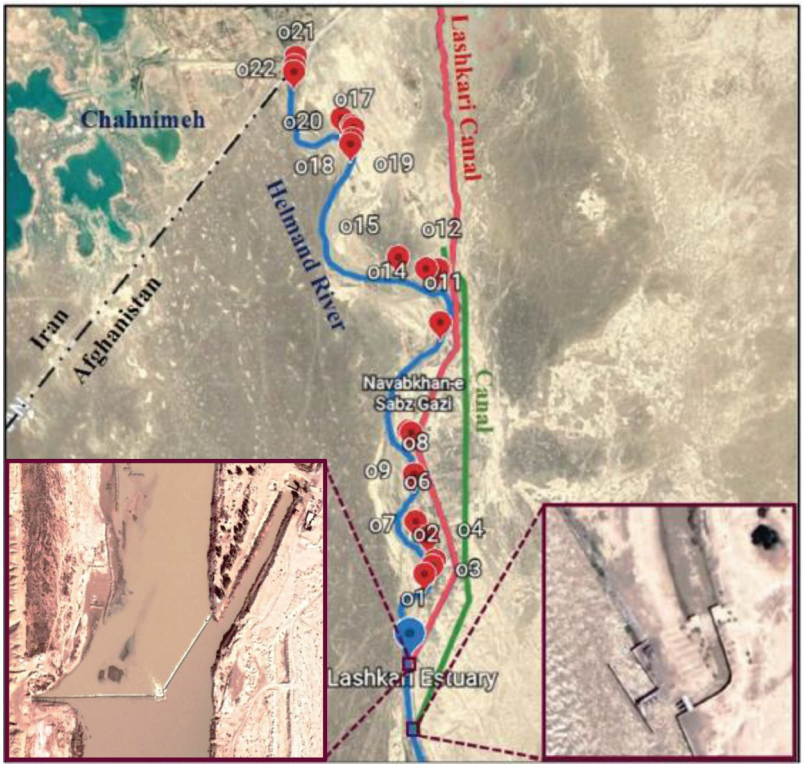

Figure 12. Between downstream of the Kamal-Khan dam and the Iranian border.

canals that redirect and transfer the water from the Helmand River to the agricultural lands of the local inhabitants, who predominantly cultivate opium plantations (Figure 11).

Moreover, between downstream of the Kamal-Khan dam and Iranian border (Figure 12), there is the Lashkari canal, which has been operated since 2016, which can divert the released water towards the Nimruz Province of Afghanistan with a diversion capacity of about 600–900 MCM. Also, about 20 withdrawal points contribute to water diversion between the intake point of the Lashkari canal and the Iranian border, where the local residents use water. As demonstrated in Figure 12, a 1.5-metre wall is built as a significant obstacle at the intake point of the Lashkari canal, preventing the water flows towards the Iranian border. Therefore, neither the climate nor involvement in war prevents Afghanistan from developing water infrastructure and utilizing water in the HRB.

Sanctioned discourse about destructive Iran–Taliban cooperation. Historical events show that in the late 1990s, when the Taliban first ascended to power in Afghanistan, several factors led to water-related issues in the HRB, resulting in the highest and most profound level of tension (Ghoreishi et al., 2021; Nagheeby & Warner, 2022). In connection with this, an apparently sanctioned discourse is reiterated in the international

press, without tangible evidence, that Iran has cooperated with the Taliban to destroy Afghanistan's dams (Nagheeby & Warner, 2022).

The PIIN in the 2020s

To conclude, the PIIN analysis reveals that the water conflict in the HRB region in the 2020s is being maintained due to Afghanistan's conviction that the 1973 Treaty and the Helmand River Commissions have provided it the agenda-setting power, material power and ideational power to carry out its hydraulic mission projects. Furthermore, the analyses indicate that Iran and Afghanistan have conflicting interests in the 2020s: Afghanistan's interests lie in utilizing water for its development projects and fulfilling its sociopolitical and socioeconomic goals, whereas Iran's interests are focused on fulfilling socioeconomic goals, meeting the water demand of Hamoun wetlands and implementing the 1973 Treaty. The adoption of opposing interests results in the failure of 2020s status to achieve transformation and construct otherized identities in HRB interactions.

Discussion

It is evident that the cooperative and conflictive interactions among the riparians are primarily driven by compatible and incompatible interests. Additionally, the HRB's influential interests are intricately linked to the interactions of power and identity. Therefore, any changes in this nexus can result in the re-emergence or reframing of needs, discourses and relationships.

The PIIN framework, applied in HRB's hydropolitical arrangements (Table 3), indicates that the reduction in US funding for hydraulic mission projects, as well as economic–commercial needs, motivated Afghanistan to engage in cooperative interaction

Table 3. The PIIN framework components for Iran-Afghanistan hydropolitical arrangements.

		The PIIN results		
Time	Actors	Power	Interest	Identity
The 1970s	Iran	*Agenda-setting power* Giving temporary access to seaports	Achieving guaranteed drinking and irrigation water rights	Cooperative
	Afghanistan	*Agenda-setting power* Providing an additional 4 m^3/s of water rights	Gaining funds for its projects Closing to the West through Iran Accessing seaports	Cooperative
	Outsiders	*Material power* Intervention	Protecting geopolitical interests	Selfish
The 2020s	Iran	*Agenda-setting power* The Helmand River Commission	Providing the drinking and irrigation water demands of the region Protecting the region from dust storms Preventing environmental migration Reducing drug trafficking Providing Hamoun's water rights	Cooperative
	Afghanistan	*Agenda-setting power* Non-decision-making *Ideational power* Sanctioned discourses	Nation-state building Avoidance of Iran Controlling water Gaining power	Otherized
	Outsiders	*Material power* Intervention	Protecting geopolitical interests	Selfish

with Iran through the 1973 Treaty. In the 2020s, however, Afghanistan's hydraulic mission, pro-Western desires, nation-state building tendencies and ambition to gain power, followed by outsiders' intervention, led to conflictive interactions. Moreover, the conflict-prone interactions of 2020 are mainly constructed by the process of otherization, which defines Iran *vis-à-vis* Afghanistan. Afghanistan also implements the process of otherization to achieve selfish identity and interests in the nation-state building on its territory and gaining power over its interactions with Iran.

As a downstream riparian, Iran was compelled to accept the 1973 Treaty due to the imminent socioenvironmental crises. In other words, Iran's primary objective was to secure guaranteed water flows from Afghanistan for the drinking and irrigation sectors. To achieve this, Iran adopted a cooperative identity and fulfilled Afghanistan's demand by granting temporary access to the roads in 1973 hydropolitical arrangements. Additionally, in the 2020s, Iran is interested in implementing the 1973 Treaty, because the regional dust storms and their effects on daily life have made Iran interested in protecting Hamoun's water rights. As a result, Iran has adopted a cooperative identity in the hydropolitical interactions and is interested in participating in the Helmand River Commission, despite not having achieved significant outcomes.

Conclusion

Interests and identity shape and are shaped by power; they are all interrelated and influence each other. In this vein, the PIIN framework proposes that the future of interactions between riparian states in the context of transboundary water resources management should be reframed by highlighting the significance of riparians in fulfilling their needs. By acknowledging and addressing each other's needs, the riparian states can gradually change their perceptions about who they are and get used to cooperation, resulting in more collective identities. Ultimately, the interplay of cooperation and identity formation can lead to transforming the otherized conflicts. Otherwise, the PIIN can cause frozen interaction through non-decision-making approach.

Although the PIIN framework does not claim to recognize the complexity and entirety of conflicts, it can identify the effect of main latent conflict factors, such as how power is intertwined with interests and identity. The framework allows for greater insight into the complexities of transboundary water arrangements. The PIIN opens an avenue for further research to shed light on the potential for riparians to cooperatively engage in regional interactions to overcome needs, meet interests, construct positive security and move towards a collective identity.

Applying the PIIN framework provides more insights for analysing the water interactions in HRB. The framework identified the influential latent factors of fluctuations in HRB interactions, transforming in 1973 and maintaining in the early 2020s. The results of HRB's water interaction analysis could provide an experimental basis for recognizing the new environment created after the withdrawal of American troops and the fall of Kabul in August 2021. It is expected that identity-based destructive issues will persist because nation-state building will present challenges for the new Afghan rulers. Additionally, new Afghan rulers may also find water to be a tool to achieve compliance from their neighbours. On

the other hand, the previous state's destructive legacy of constructed water-related interests and identity may remain the prominent strategy for retaining legitimacy and power.

Notes

1. Although both realism and constructivism in international relations acknowledge the importance of interests in shaping state behaviour, they differ in their understanding of how interests are formed.
2. The PIIN framework would mostly be grouped under the constructivism school of thought but given the state-centricity and importance of power, it could denote bridging structural realism and constructivism.
3. There are several advantages to adopting Lukes' (2005) power framework for the PIIN analysis. First, Luke's framework provides a comprehensive understanding of power that goes beyond traditional views of power as simply the ability to influence others. Second, it emphasizes the importance of discourse in shaping power relations. However, some critics argue that discourse analysis, which is a key component of Luke's framework, can be overly subjective and lacks empirical rigour (Dowding, 2006).
4. Interests are beliefs about the mode of fulfilling needs (Wendt, 1999; ideological and material) and needs can be constructed, and are changeable.
5. The state of being other or different.
6. For example, the politician's identity constitutes a need for votes and an interest in getting re-elected; the identity of a professor constitutes a need for teaching and publishing and an interest in getting tenure (Wendt, 1999). Thus, actors cannot know what they 'need' until they know who they are.
7. 'The hydraulic mission entails that the state, embodied in an autonomous hydrocracy, takes the lead in water resources development to capture as much water as possible for human uses' (Wester et al., 2009).
8. In international relations, negative and positive security are both recognized (Gjorv, 2012). Negative security refers to the absence of threats to the state, individual and ecosystem, whereas positive security is the desired state where all stakeholders are satisfied.
9. This strategy is illustrated by the 1947 statement by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (adopted from Nagheeby and Rieu-Clarke, 2020):

   'The United States and Great Britain are keenly aware of this Soviet interest, which may threaten the strong traditional British influence in Afghanistan and adjacent areas. It is an important part of American policy in the Middle East that no state in the area shall have its independence and integrity endangered and that American influence be maintained and strengthened wherever possible. A dispute such as the one between Iran and Afghanistan over the Helmand River threatens this policy.'
10. Typically, donors from around the world are reluctant to fund water-storage initiatives situated in river basins fraught with conflict.
11. Consequently, in September 1974, Iran and Afghanistan signed a five-year agreement on transit in Kabul.
12. Generally, environmental awareness and the importance of protecting its rights emerged in the 1980s with the 'Reflexive Modernity–Green' paradigm. Thus, the neglect of Hamoun's water rights in the 1973 Helmand Water Treaty contradicts this paradigm.
13. In the 21st century, the USA, Canada, Denmark, India, China, Turkey, and international organizations have invested in Helmand Valley projects.
14. The reason for constructing an identity around water is that Afghans can gain power from it.

15. Although they believe that water can be sold to Iran, this highlights that water has been constructed as an Afghan identity. In reality, water is simply a natural resource and not an identity to Afghans.
16. Introduced by Wendt (1994).
17. During Ghani's presidency, Iran was assumed to be the USA's adversary due to Iran's peaceful nuclear activity, and Afghanistan attempted to create an enemy from Iran to become a friend of the USA.
18. The presence of contradictions between claims and realities strengthens the argument that naturalization is being utilized in the HRB. Zeitoun et al. (2020) refer to it as a scapegoat tactic, where climate change is blamed for human-manufactured issues, which are then justified under the guise of natural events. Consequently, naturalization appears to be a sanction discourse strategy for the upstream country to justify the HRB's reduced water level in terms of climate change and low precipitation, while avoiding cooperation for monitoring the treaty's implementation and fact-finding for the disappearing Hamoun wetlands.
19. Adopted from Andik (2023).

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to extend their sincere appreciation to the editorial team and the reviewers for their valuable guidance, insightful feedback and support throughout the publication process.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the This research was conducted without any external funding. [Non].

ORCID

Seyedeh Zahra Ghoreishi http://orcid.org/0009-0001-5394-0229
Hojjat Mianabadi http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7041-4634
Jeroen Warner http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2847-8770
Mohsen Nagheeby http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0877-1080
Sumit Vij http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5252-797X
Atefeh Parvaresh Rizi http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0793-6728
Milad Jafari http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4051-9010
Atefe ArfaFathollahkhani http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5379-6490

References

Ahlers, R., Brandimarte, L., Kleemans, I., & Sadat, S. H. (2014). Ambitious development on fragile foundations: Criticalities of current large dam construction in Afghanistan. *Geoforum*, *54*(1), s49–58. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2014.03.004

Alam, A. (1992). *The Shah and I: The confidential diary of Iran's royal court, 1969–77* (A. Alikhani, ed.). I.B. Tauris Publishers.

Andik, B. (2023). *The downstream infrastractures of the Kajaki Dam in Afghanistan*. Strategic Studies Think Tank.

Azam, G. F. (1999). *The effects of local, regional and global politics on the development of the Helmand-Arghandab valley of Afghanistan*. [PhD thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies].
Bachrach, P., & Baratz, M. S. (1963). Decisions and nondecisions: An analytical framework. *American Political Science Review*, *57*(3), 632–642. https://doi.org/10.2307/1952568
Bachrach, P., & Baratz, M. S. (1970). *Power and poverty: Theory and practice*. Oxford University Press.
Bennett, J. T. (2019). *Using conservation conflict transformation as a framework to address social conflict*. [Masters' Thesis, University of Gothenburg].
Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
Campbell, D. T. (2007). Common fate, similarity, and other indices of the status of aggregates of persons as social entities. *Behavioral Science*, *3*(1), 14–25. https://doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830030103
Czarniawska, B. (2008). Alterity/identity interplay in image construction. In *The Sage handbook of new approaches in management and organization* (pp. 49–62). Sage.
Dahl, R. A. (1957). The concept of power. *Behavioral Science*, *2*(3), 201–215.
Dal, E. P. (2018). Rising powers in international conflict management: An introduction. *Third World Quarterly*, *39*(12), 2207–2221. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2018.1503048
Daoudy, M. (2016). The structure-identity nexus: Syria and Turkey's collapse (2011). *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *29*(3), 1074–1096. https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2016.1231659
Delli Priscoli, J., & Wolf, A. (2009). *Managing and transforming water conflicts*. Cambridge University Press.
Dowding, K. (2006). Three-dimensional power: A discussion of Steven Lukes' Power: A Radical View. *Political Studies Review*, *4*(2), 136–145.
Galtung, J., & Fischer, D. (2013). Conflict transformation by peaceful means (the transcend method). In *Johan galtung: Pioneer of peace research* (pp. 59–69). Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-32481-9_5
Ghoreishi, S. Z., Mianabadi, H., & Jafari, M. (2023). Reframing transboundary water security. In K. Szalkai & M. Szalai (Eds.), *Theorizing transboundary waters in international relations* (pp. 83–104). Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023.
Ghoreishi, S. Z., Mianabadi, H., & Parvaresh-Rizi, A. (2021). The TWINS framework for illustrating co-existing conflict and cooperation in the Hirmand River Basin. *Iranian Journal of Soil and Water Research*, *52*(1), 273–300. In Persian. https://doi.org/10.22059/ijswr.2020.305456.668661
Gjorv, G. H. (2012). Security by any other name: Negative security, positive security, and a multi-actor security approach. *Review of International Studies*, *38*(4), 835–859. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000751
Hafeznia, M. R., Mojtahedzadeh, P., & Alizadeh, J. (2006). Hirmand hydropolitic and its effect on the political relations of Iran and Afghanistan. *The Journal of Spatial Planning*, *10*(2), 83–103. In Persian
HajiHosseini, M., HajiHosseini, H., Morid, S., Delavar, M., & Booij, M. J. (2020). Impacts of land use changes and climate variability on transboundary Hirmand River using SWAT. *Journal of Water and Climate Change*, *11*(4), 1695–1711. https://doi.org/10.2166/wcc.2019.100
Hasenclever, A., Mayer, P., & Rittberger, V. (1996). Interests, power, knowledge: The study of international regimes. *Mershon International Studies Review*, *40*(2), 177–228. https://doi.org/10.2307/222775
Hayward, C. R. (1998). De-facing power. *Polity*, *31*(1), 1–22.
Holland, C. C. (2022). *Inequality, identity, and the politics of Northern Ireland: Challenges of peacebuilding and conflict transformation*. Lexington/Rowman and Littlefield.
HRDC. (1951). *Report of the Helmand River delta commission*.
Kachiar, Y. (2019). *Afghanistan's landlocked trap*. Vivekananda International Foundation. https://www.vifindia.org/article/2019/february/08/afghanistans-landlocked-trap

Keohane, R., & Nye, J. S. (1987). Power and Interdependence revisited. *International Organization*, *41*(4), 725–753. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027661

Keohane, R., & Nye, J. S. (2001). *Power and Interdependence* (3rd ed.) ed.). Longman.

Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE guide. *Medical Teacher*, *42*(8), 846–854.

Lane, A. M. (2020). *The securitization of transboundary water resources: A discourse analysis of Iranian-Afghan relations in the Helmand River Basin*. [MSc thesis, Georgetown University].

Lederach, J. P. (2003). *Little book of conflict transformation: Clear articulation of the guiding principles by a pioneer in the field* (Original). Good Books.

Lukes, S. (2005). *Power: A radical view*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Malyar, I. (2016). *Transboundary water institutions in developing countries: A case study in Afghanistan*. [MSc thesis, Oregon State University].

Maoz, Z., Terris, L. G., Kuperman, R. D., & Talmud, I. (2007). What Is the enemy of my enemy? Causes and consequences of imbalanced international relations, 1816–2001. *The Journal of Politics*, *69*(1), 100–115. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00497.x

Marigat, S. K., Nzomo, M., Kagwanja, P., & Kiamba, A. (2017). Power and conflict management: Is there a relationship? *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *12*(8), 8–15. https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2208050815

Martin, A., Armijos, M. T., Coolsaet, B., Dawson, N., A S Edwards, G., Few, R., … White, C. S. (2020). Environmental justice and transformations to sustainability. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, *62*(6), 19–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/00139157.2020.1820294

McMahon, H. (1904). *McMahon's memorandum on the Sistan water question*.

Menga, F. (2014). *Power and dams in Central Asia*. [PhD thesis, The University of Cagliari].

Menga, F. (2016). Domestic and international dimensions of transboundary water politics. *Water Alternatives*, *9*(3), 704–723.

Miall, H. (2004). Conflict transformation: A multi-dimensional task. In A. Austin, M. Fischer, & N. Ropers (Eds.), *Transforming ethnopolitical conflict* (pp. 67–89). Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-05642-3_4

Mianabadi, A., Davary, K., Mianabadi, H., & Karimi, P. (2020). International environmental conflict management in transboundary river basins. *Water Resources Management*, *34*(11), 3445–3464. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11269-020-02576-7

Morgenthau, H. (1962). *Politics among nations: The struggle for peace and power*. Alfred Knopf.

Nagheeby, M. (2021). *Anarchy and the law of international watercourses: Unpacking the role of equitable and reasonable utilisation principle in the pursuit of water conflict transformation*. [PhD thesis, The University of Northumbria at Newcastle].

Nagheeby, M., Rieu-Clarke, A. (2020). Water diplomacy in the Helmand/Hirmand River Basin: Exploring the obstacles to cooperation within the shadow of anarchy. In A. Kittikhoun & S. Schmeier (Eds.), *River basin organizations in water diplomacy* (pp. 201–222). Taylor & Francis.

Nagheeby, M., & Warner, J. (2022). The 150-year itch: Afghanistan-*Iran* hydropolitics over the *Helmand*/Hirmand River. *Water Alternatives*, *15*(3), 551–573.

Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., & Miall, H. (2011). *Contemporary conflict resolution: The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts*. Polity.

Rasooly, N. (2020). *Water governance in Afghanistan*. [MSc thesis, Oregon State University].

Sellick, P. (2020). Nonviolent conflict transformation. In F. O. Hampson, A. Özerdem, & J. Kent (Eds.), *Handbook of peace, security and development* (pp. 107–115). Routledge.

Takal, K. M. (2022a). *Do politics about water, don't trade it*. Twitter https://twitter.com/Khan_Takal/status/1484194170675904513

Takal, K. M. (2022b). *Recommendations of "Khan Mohammad Takal" to the Taliban about the Iran-Afghanistan water negotiations in the 25th Helmand water commission*. Twitter https://twitter.com/Khan_Takal/status/1537874447671209984?t=-QpX94Nyy_P-EvwCWd_N-g&s=19

Thomas, V., Ahmad Azizi, M., & Khalid, B. (2016). *Developing transboundary water resources: What perspectives for cooperation between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan?* Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Kabul.

Thomas, V., & Mahmoudzadeh Varzi, M. (2015). A legal licence for an ecological disaster: The inadequacies of the 1973 Helmand/Hirmand Water Treaty for sustainable transboundary water resources development. *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, *31*(4), 499–518. https://doi.org/10.1080/07900627.2014.1003346

TOLOnews. (2021). *President Ghani inaugurates Kamal-Khan dam*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQ1pUgeXtv8

van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. Sage.

Vij, S., Warner, J. F., Biesbroek, R., & Groot, A. (2020). Non-decisions are also decisions: Power interplay between Bangladesh and India over the Brahmaputra River. *Water International*, *45* (4), 254–274. https://doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2018.1554767

Warner, J. (2004). Understanding the role of politics in water management. *Proceedings of the Workshop on Water and Politics, 276*. World Water Council and the World Conservation Unnion.

Wendt, A. (1994). Collective identity formation and the international state. *American Political Science Review*, *88*(2), 96–384. https://doi.org/10.2307/2944711

Wendt, A. (1999). *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Wester, P., Mollard, E., Silva-Ochoa, P., & Vargas-Velazquez, S. (2009). From half-full to half-empty: The hydraulic mission and water overexploitation in the lerma-chapala Basin, Mexico. In F. Molle & P. Wester (Eds.), *River basin trajectories: Societies, environments and development* (pp. 75–98). CABI Publications.

Whitney, J. W. (2006). *Geology, water, and wind in the lower Helmand Basin, southern Afghanistan*. U.S. Geological Survey.

Wu, C.-H. (2014). *Taking interests and international conflict more seriously* [Phd. Thsis, University of South Carolina – Columbia]. https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/2744

Zeitoun, M., Cascão, A. E., Warner, J., Mirumachi, N., Matthews, N., Menga, F., & Farnum, R. (2017). Transboundary water interaction III: Contest and compliance. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, *17*(2), 271–294. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-016-9325-x

Zeitoun, M., Mirumachi, N., & Warner, J. (2020). *Water conflicts: Analysis for transformation*. Oxford University Press.

Zeitoun, M., Mirumachi, N., Warner, J., Kirkegaard, M., & Cascao, A. (2019). Analysis for Water Conflict Transformation. *Water International*, *45*(2), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2019.1607479

Zeitoun, M., & Warner, J. (2006). HydroHegemony: A framework for analysis of transboundary water conflicts. *Water Policy*, *8*(5), 435–460.