

Shared Water Resources in Kura-Aras River Basin; the Promoter of Peace in South Caucasia

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Abstract

The drainage basin of Kura-Aras in the South Caucasus region is located among Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Two main rivers of Kura and Aras are among the biggest rivers in this region with many economic, social, security and political issues. Aras River can be considered as Iran's natural zone of influence and interests because it is located along the Iranian border and is beneficial to this country. Despite this, because of having a border with Russia and the membership of three riparian states in the European Union, it has also taken the attention of great powers and international organizations. For this reason, political, economic and environmental players and actors of the Kura-Aras basin in the south Caucasus are diverse, and both regional and global.

Collaborations based on limited and multilateral agreements among Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan are mainly established through the initiatives of global organizations and European Union and have ignored that Iran and Turkey are two main players and actors in the use and management of the water resources of this basin. Since no international institution has been established for the integrated management of shared water resources in this basin and no treaty has been signed for the sharing of these resources, the use of complexity theory can be beneficial for the optimum use of these resources. Based on different interactions and the influence or common dependence of effective elements in the use of common water resources in the Kura-Aras basin on each other, the understanding of subjects and the prediction of future behavior of the players is so difficult and results in unique behavior of the system that is the result of the accumulation of the behaviors of actors in the micro level. The use of complexity theory in the international relations provides a correct understanding of the issues of this basin, helps find an answer for this main question: how does the lack of balance in the resources and the utilization and also the dependence on the

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shared water resources affect the relations between the states of Kura-Aras basin?

Considering the complexity theory, different features of the behaviors of the states in response to complex issues is not predictable for any research or researcher, but the review of value and legal framework shows that we are not faced with an unorganized complexity and we have access to frameworks for the understanding of the reasons for this complex issues, and we also have common legal values that are agreed upon for an answer. Thus, the states that share the Kura-Aras basin can act based on principles such as equality of sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual interests and good faith and through the use of the above principles can cooperate in this complex system for an ideal use of resources and enough protection of common water resources with each other and reach middle grounds that maintains an organized complexity and the dynamicity of the system and move towards trust making and the stability in their cooperation.

The current study takes advantage the explanatory method and for the testing of the hypothesis uses the positive method of data collection and analysis of the related data and tests the indexes related to the variables forming the concepts. Also, despite the fact that the statistics and data related to the water relations in this water basin is shallow based on the political approaches with an emphasis on international relations, the results of this study proves this hypothesis that the diversity and dependence of factors affecting the use of common water resources in this basin results in the promotion of collaboration and peace, trust making, the increase in stability and reduction of political and security disputes among the states of this basin through the use of two common principles: equitable and reasonable utilization and participation; obligation not to cause significant harm.

1. Based on the rules of the New York 1997 Convention, the principle of equitable and reasonable utilization makes it necessary to pay attention to geographic, hydrographic, hydrological, climatic, ecological and other factors of a natural character; the social and economic needs of the watercourse States concerned; the population dependent on the watercourse in each watercourse states; the effects of the use or uses of the watercourses in the one watercourse state on other watercourse states; existing and potential uses of the watercourse; conservation, protection, development and economy of use of the water resources of the watercourse and the costs of measures taken to that effect; the availability of alternatives of comparable value to a particular planned or existing use.

2. Also the principle of obligation not to cause any significant harm to the other state sharing the basin results in international basin states shall in utilizing an international basin in the territories, take all appropriate measures to prevent the causing of significant harm to other basin states. Where significant harm is nevertheless caused to another water state, the states whose use causes such harm shall in the absence of an agreement to

such use, take all appropriate measures in consultation with the affected state, to eliminate or mitigate such harm and where appropriate, to discuss the question of compensation.

In this regard the answer to the issue of Kura-Aras basin is not principally establishing a linear relationship between two concepts or main variables. As a result, the states sharing this basin can act based on the principles such as equality of sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual interests and good faith and through the use of the above principles can cooperate with each other in this complex system in order to reach an ideal utilization and proper protection of common water resources.

Keywords: Common Water Resources, Integrated Management of Water Resources, Kura-Aras Drainage Basin, Peace, South Caucasus.