

# **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY: INTEREST OR VALUE ORIENTED RELATIONSHIP? THE CASES OF THE TRANS-BOUNDARY RIVERS NESTOS AND EVROS.**

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The management of Rivers Nestos/Mesta and Evros/Maritsa/Meric is a striking example representing the quest for environmental security and environmental stability. It has been highly depicted in bibliography that trans-boundary rivers have been a theater of tension (and sometimes of cooperation) between the interested riparian countries.

Today, almost the 50% of the river basins are transnational with most of them being under no agreement for resolving the problem of their management. Indeed, the major dilemma that states sharing trans-boundary rivers face is that of managing the part of the river included in their territory by themselves, without considering the other state.

Four theories tried to resolve this dilemma: The theory of absolute sovereignty, the theory of territorial integrity, the theory of the community in the waters and last the limited territorial sovereignty theory.

The first theory, as the title reveals, supports the idea that the states are the absolute possessors of their territory and the natural resources that are included, having all the rights to act in their own will. It is a totally interest based approach focusing on realists assumptions such as power and territorial integrity.

The second theory supports the idea that when for example a country is being run over by an international river, this country has no right to change its natural flow because of the possible problems that an act like that could cause to other coastal countries. Here, therefore, is imported the idea of internationalisation of behavior of states via the establishment of rules and agreements that will regulate proportional cases.

The third theory, as its title also reveals, can be found clearly in the antipode of the theory of absolute sovereignty. Indeed, while the first one was quite supportive to state's interests, this theory supports the rights of all coastal states of the river, and prompts to the direction of collaboration via the continuous co-ordination of interested parts for the achievement of the biggest possible result with regard to the more efficient use of the river. Last but not least, the fourth theory works as a "bridge" which connects theories one and three by suggesting that each state should seek for equal profits from the usage of the river.

In general, and in totally correlation with the theory based approach mentioned above the tensions around the management of trans-boundary river basins can be described in terms of international relations theories as the fight between a value based approach against an interest based one. In fact, because of the many different uses a river may have, and also because of the limited capacity of fresh water in the earth, the management of trans-boundary rivers becomes quite challenging and for many cases a priority for a country's foreign policy. Thus, environmental security as a term can be placed within two different frameworks. A normative one and an interest based. Thus, the management of trans-boundary water resources constitutes an important part of study for environmental security. International relations tried to examine the relations that can be constructed in those very challenging cases. This attempt was mainly focused through two basic approaches. On the one hand, there was the normative-value based approach (where norms are defined as social values constructed by social

consensus) focusing mostly on the collaboration of the interested parties under the creation of a legal framework. This framework was set through the creation of International and European environmental law. On the other hand, there was an interest-based attempt to explain the possible outcomes from the management of a trans-boundary water resource. The difference springs from the competitive theories of International Relations, the liberal-realist debate. Such a case is also the case of Greek-Bulgarian River Nestos/Mesta.

However, these two cases have some strong differences. Initially, while for the Greek-Bulgarian River Nestos/Mesta there is a bilateral agreement since 1995, in the case of Bulgarian/Greek/Turkish River Evros/Maritsa/Meric a similar trilateral agreement does not exist. This is due to the lack of trust between the three countries because of bad political relationships. Another important difference is that parts of the Evros/Meric River bed serve as state border between Greece and Turkey. Thus, both Evros and its tributary Ardas (shared by Greece and Bulgaria) are located in a military controlled area. This means that special permit is requested from military authorities in order for scientific and other activities to be held. On the contrary, in the case of Nestos/Mesta there is not such a problem concerning the border line. Another key difference has to do with the different uses of the two Rivers. Concerning Greece, for example, the River Nestos/Mesta is very important for the hydroelectric dams of Thisavros and Platanovrisi, while for Bulgaria river Evros/Maritsa is also of great importance for the same reason.

Apart from these basic differences, there also are some 'negative' similarities. Initially, despite the bilateral agreements between Greece and Bulgaria concerning the management of Nestos/Mesta River the situation remains quite problematic as in the case of Evros where there is no agreement. Moreover, despite the international and European legal framework that exists and which the interested parties have accepted in the case of Nestos/Mesta river it seems that there is still a lot of work to be done. In the case of Evros things are slightly different since Greece and Bulgaria have ratified International Conventions such as the Helsinki Convention, while the third interested party, Turkey has not done so. So things seemed a little bit more complicated in this case.

Nevertheless, in both cases the problems are quite similar and have to do not only with the floods that destroying the agricultural production, but also with issues of water pollution which is probably the most crucial problem in those cases. According to many experts, this situation can become even worse in the forthcoming years. So, what can be deduced from the bilateral agreements and the implementation of international conventions is that they can not lead or force to an accurate character of coordination on important issues such as pollution. On the contrary, the main focus was mostly on terms of river flows percentage (especially for the Greek side in the case of Nestos). In other words, the adaptation of International Environmental Law and the EU directive was only a fake facade for the interested parties with their real intention being revealed by the problematic agreement of 1995 for the Nestos/Mesta River case, and for the 'non-agreement' in the case of Evros/Maritsa/Meric River, meaning that state interests are taken more seriously than international norms.

Yet, things can be improved especially if the interested parties look up to the literature and explore the history of positive trans-boundary river management. Indeed, from the literature can be presumed that there are some very good examples of transnational cooperation between coastal countries. Such a striking example is the case of Nile, where in 1992 in Cairo negotiations have started with primary goal the development and exploitation of a complete plan for the management of the basin. The result of this process was the creation of the Nile Basin Initiative in 1999. The Initiative with the support of the World Bank, the UNDP, the Canadian International Development Agency and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) went further to the creation of a plan not only for the whole River but also on part departments of the basin. Thus, the intervention of international community, along with the need for growth for all the riparian countries can mitigate any possible politico-military tensions which might be connected with the management of a trans-boundary river such as the Nile.

Another important example is the case of Gages River. In this case the agreement between India and Bangladesh has to do mostly with the distribution of water and it was signed in 1996 in order to share the water between the two countries from the dam of Farakka. Characteristically, in the agreement are included principles of the International Water Law such as the principle of equality and non-cause of damage something which underlines the willingness of the two countries for cooperation.

Other similar cases such as the Mekong River and even the Jordan River agreement in some point can unveil with most obvious way the unwillingness of the interested parties of the Nestos and Evros cases to cooperate. Despite the fact that these two cases are not as difficult as those mentioned in the international literature, however, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey deny cooperation initiatives. Of course, blames for this negative result should also go to the lack of interest from the international community which has not intervened in a way of forcing these countries to cooperate.