PREFACE
Water is an important basic natural resource. It is the most fundamental substance crucial for the existence of civilization, or for the existence of life itself. With increasing global population and improvement in the quality of life, more and more water will be required for different uses. Water as a resource is not evenly distributed over space and time. Some times during the year, it is in plenty and at other times becomes scarce. Moreover, it is abundant somewhere and scarce in other places. Water has always been in great demand for multi-purpose uses e.g. domestic industrial, agriculture, navigation, recreation and aqua-culture. Through water has been unquestionably identified as a precious resource, its management and utilization has distinctly differed from those of other economic resources. While the total amount of water available in the world is constant this amount of water can certainly meet vastly higher human needs if used efficiently.

Approximately 71 per cent of the surface of the earth is covered with water including the great oceans, lakes rivers and the polar icecaps. Lakes, rivers and oceans have provided sustenance, transportation and protection. Current estimates demonstrate the total volume of water on earth to be 44,150 MCM; of this 93.3 per cent is ocean water which can be used for fisheries and navigation. Only 2.7 per cent is fresh water. 77.2 per cent of the fresh water is stored in polar icecaps and glaciers and 22.7 per cent is stored as groundwater and soil moisture. As deep groundwater is not easily accessible, only 10 per cent fresh water is available for human consumption.

Many countries are tied together by joint dependence on the same river system, which can lead to conflict. An international river has become an element of dispute in the politics of arid region. One such region is West Asia facing acute crisis over water resources.
II

The region has arid or semi-arid climate with shortage of rainfall. While demand for water is rapidly growing in West Asia, the supply of fresh water is limited. As far as an arid region is concerned, typical war is generated by increasing competition for water combined with problems of water shortage during the dry seasons.

Water resources management and allocation has crept on the strategic agenda in West Asia, since water-related allocation data has become politically sensitive. The strategic significance of water in West Asia requires consideration of the following issues: the concept of the water weapon itself; can it serve as a useful deterrent? An upstream state on an international river may threaten to build dams regulating flow downstream. A downstream state on the other hand can threaten to destroy water diversion works. Water is a major part of a complex system of political and economic leverages. There is ample evidence to show that actual conflict in West Asia is directly and exclusively related to the control and exploitation of water resources.

The purpose of this study is to present a detailed account of the conflict surrounding sharing of river water resources and study its cause and effect on the West Asian region. It will look into the potential conflictual situation that has been built up as a result of the region's limited water resources. This study aims at looking into the problem in a clear and objective manner and to identify the prime factors responsible for generating intense international tension and conflict. The eventual aim of this work is to seek out possible practical solutions to tide over water crisis in the West Asian region.

The primary concern in the present study is to develop a conceptual framework in connection with rivers water allocation among riparian states. The focus of this study is on four rivers. These rivers are the Jordan, the Litani, the Euphrates and the Tigris. It is these four rivers which have been the centre of acute controversy since the Second World War. There is intense competition among the riparian states to control the flow of these rivers which at times has degenerated into actual hostilities. All rivers have
perennial water course in semi desert to land and as such they assume importance far out of proportion to their modest discharges. Dispute over allocation of water has blocked cooperative efforts to solve the problem and the perpetual interference of great powers in the region have made these issues more complex and intractable.

The Thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter begins with a discussion of the geography of the West Asian region as a whole. It then moves on to the hydrology of the region wherein the four rivers which are the focus of the study are discussed in detail.

The second chapter opens with a discussion of the historical background. The struggle over Jordan as well as Litani water resources have been an important component of the Arab-Israeli Conflict since its inception. Water development project which have been put forth from time to time for the utilization of the waters of the Jordan and Litani have also been discussed in this chapter. The development of the Euphrates-Tigris basin began since around 4000B.C. and the conflict that have arisen in this century have also been analysed in this chapter.

The third chapter deals with the political dimension of the conflict. It is hydro-politics more than economics that is at the base of much of the conflict over rivers' waters. Jordan and Litani rivers have become in inextricably linked to the Arab-Israeli Conflict and water is being perceived as a primary strategic factor behind political and military manoeuvring. In the case of the Tigris-Euphrates too, control over water is seen to be a decisive factor in the competition for regional hegemony.

Chapter four analyses the role of International Laws and Treaties and the extent of their applicability to the problem of sharing river waters in West Asia. The last chapter is a summarization of the entire study. It also highlights solution proposals in consonance with the situation obtaining at present.

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