

Rivers Tigris and Euphrates

Potential for water conflict

Tigris and Euphrates Rivers



Players

- These two rivers supply **Syria and Iraq**, however the **source is in Turkey**.
- Turkey has been building **hydroelectric dams**.
 - **Reduced water** flows into Iraq and Syria by approximately **80 per cent** and **40 per cent** respectively.
- Syria built dams in response, which led to **even less water reaching Iraq**. This almost led to war in 1975.
- Low flow rates in Iraq have allowed **salt water to infiltrate nearly 150km inland (saltwater encroachment)** from the Persian Gulf.
 - The decline in water flows has also led to **decreased agricultural yields**. Iraq reported its worst cereal harvest in a decade in 2009, indicating a potential food security problem.

Earlier this year (2018), Iraq threatened to take its case for an increase in water flows from Turkey and Syria to the UN.

Use of water as political leverage

In 1987, Turkey and Syria came to an agreement over water sharing.

- Turkey would maintain a flow rate of **500 cubic meters a second** where the Euphrates River passes into Syria.
- Turkey asked for Syria's cooperation on the issue of **Kurdish rebels** residing in Syrian territory.
- This has created a dangerous precedent, as water scarcity is set to increase, and the **political leverage wielded by Turkey** will consequently increase in turn.

The future

Several droughts in Iraq in recent years has increased the **likelihood of conflict** in the future. The risk of regular future water shortages could make the Iraqi people increasingly desperate.

Projections by the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** indicate a changing climate and the potential for a **permanent decrease in rainfall**. In addition, rapidly increasing populations within the region could escalate tensions into major conflict in the future.

