

From the Perspective of Nation Learning An Analysis of the Transition of Jordan River Governance Path

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Abstract

The Jordan River is one of the main water sources in the Middle East region. Insufficient water volume and deteriorating ecological environment have triggered a severe water crisis in the Jordan river basin, further complicated by strategic games among riparian countries. This paper analyzes Jordan River governance from the perspective of nation learning. Nation learning refers to the tendency of states to adopt different and more effective means to achieve their goals. The governance path of the Jordan River among riparian countries has gone through different stages, with changes in governance goals and methods, leading to a complex learning process. From 1948 to the Third Middle East War, Israel and Arab countries along the Jordan River primarily focused on traditional security considerations regarding the river governance, aiming to compete for the territory of water sources and water volume, mainly using hard measures. After the Third Middle East War until the end of the Cold War, the main goal of Israel and Arab countries along the Jordan River regarding the river governance was still to compete for water volume, along with the decrease in the frequency of using hard measures. While, during this period, non-traditional security factors emerged as considerations in the governance goal, such as promoting economic and agricultural development. Additionally, both sides employed soft measures such as intergovernmental cooperation. After the end of the Cold War, restoring the ecological environment and water volume of the Jordan river gradually became the main goals for riparian countries, and soft measures were adopted. Substantially riparian countries experienced nation learning in the process of Jordan River governance, driven mainly by External Events and Cognitive Beliefs. External Events include factors such as third party involvement, relations of riparian countries, and ecological environment of the Jordan river basin, while Cognitive Beliefs are related to the views of national leaders and shifts in political power. Due to increasing uncertainty brought about by global climate change and Israel-Hamas conflict, as well as insufficient coordination and pollution control capabilities among riparian countries, these factors pose challenges to the prospects of Jordan River governance.

Keywords: Jordan River governance, nation learning, traditional security, nontraditional security