

**Water and Power in Africa:
The Geopolitics of Scarcity from the Sahel to the Nile**

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(www.rieas.gr) Publication date: 13 September 2026

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Introduction

Water has increasingly become one of the most consequential strategic resources in Africa. Across a continent marked by considerable hydrological diversity, the challenge is not simply the absolute absence of water, but its uneven distribution, seasonal variability, limited accessibility and increasingly contested use. Population growth, urbanisation, agricultural expansion and climate change are placing additional pressure on already fragile water systems, while inadequate infrastructure and weak institutional capacity frequently prevent available resources from being effectively managed or equitably distributed. In this context, water scarcity is progressively moving beyond the realm of environmental policy and development assistance to become a question of national security, interstate relations and regional stability.

The strategic importance of water is particularly apparent in regions where hydrological boundaries do not correspond to political ones. Rivers and aquifers routinely cross national frontiers, requiring states to reconcile domestic development objectives with the interests of their neighbours. The Nile Basin represents perhaps the clearest example. Ethiopia's construction and subsequent operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has transformed the relationship between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, placing questions of

sovereignty, hydroelectric development, agricultural security and downstream water availability at the centre of regional diplomacy. For Ethiopia, the Nile is increasingly associated with the right to development and energy security; for Egypt, whose population and economy remain overwhelmingly dependent upon the river, the same resource is inseparable from national survival. Sudan occupies a strategically complex position between these two competing perspectives, while simultaneously facing the devastating consequences of internal conflict and the destruction of critical water and energy infrastructure.

Further west, the Sahel illustrates a different dimension of the emerging water-security challenge. In countries such as Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad, competition over water is closely intertwined with agriculture, pastoralism, food insecurity, displacement and political instability. The Lake Chad Basin demonstrates the difficulty of managing a shared hydrological system in an environment already affected by armed conflict and cross-border insecurity. Meanwhile, the region's extensive groundwater reserves remain comparatively invisible in strategic discussions, despite their importance to rural populations and their potential vulnerability to increased extraction. The Iullemeden–Taoudéni/Tanezrouft aquifer system, shared by several Sahelian and North African states, illustrates how the geopolitics of water extends well beyond the major rivers that traditionally dominate discussions of African hydropolitics.

These developments raise a fundamental diplomatic question: can existing mechanisms of interstate cooperation adapt to a future in which water demand, climatic variability and political competition are increasing simultaneously? Institutions such as the Nile Basin Initiative and the Lake Chad Basin Commission demonstrate that African states have already developed important frameworks for dialogue, information exchange and cooperative management. Yet the effectiveness of such mechanisms depends upon political trust, institutional capacity and the willingness of states to reconcile national interests with the requirements of shared resource management. Transboundary groundwater presents an additional challenge, as aquifers are considerably more difficult to monitor and govern than visible surface-water systems, while international legal frameworks governing shared aquifers remain comparatively underdeveloped.

The geopolitical implications extend beyond Africa's immediate neighbourhood. Water scarcity can affect agricultural production, food prices, livelihoods and patterns of migration, thereby contributing to pressures that can cross borders and eventually reach the Mediterranean. At the same time, the growing involvement of external powers and private investors in African agriculture, infrastructure and resource development introduces another layer to the politics of water. Gulf states, for example, have sought to strengthen their food-security strategies through agricultural investments in countries possessing greater land and water resources, particularly along the Nile and Red Sea corridors. Such investment does not necessarily constitute exploitation; it can provide capital and infrastructure where domestic resources are insufficient. Nevertheless, it raises questions regarding the distribution of water-intensive economic activity and the extent to which foreign capital can influence the strategic use of national water resources.

The question of corporate involvement should therefore be situated within this broader framework rather than treated as the principal cause of Africa's water insecurity. Multinational companies operating in the food and beverage sectors, including PepsiCo, Nestlé and Coca-Cola, have increasingly developed water-efficiency and watershed-management programmes in countries such as Egypt and Ethiopia. Their activities illustrate the growing role of non-state actors in water governance, but the fundamental responsibility for allocating and protecting strategic water resources remains with states and regional institutions.

Ultimately, the geopolitics of African water is not simply a story of scarcity. It is a story of access, allocation and power. The central question is increasingly not only who possesses water, but who controls the infrastructure, territory, technology and diplomatic mechanisms through which water can be accessed and utilised. From the groundwater reserves of the Sahel to the contested waters of the Nile, the management of shared resources will increasingly influence agricultural security, economic development, interstate relations and regional stability. Understanding these dynamics is therefore essential to assessing the future security environment of Africa and, by extension, the strategic interests of its European neighbours.

The Nile Basin: Water, Sovereignty and Interstate Competition

The Nile Basin provides the clearest illustration of the transformation of water from a development concern into a matter of strategic diplomacy. The river traverses or serves eleven countries within its wider basin, while the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) currently brings together ten states Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda with Eritrea participating as an observer. Established in 1999, the NBI was designed to provide an inclusive institutional framework for consultation, information exchange and cooperative management of the basin's shared resources.

The existence of such an institution is significant. It demonstrates that the Nile should not be understood exclusively through the bilateral confrontation between Egypt and Ethiopia. The basin is a multilateral political space in which upstream and downstream states possess different, and sometimes competing, interests. Ethiopia seeks to exploit its considerable hydropower potential and expand electricity access; Sudan has interests in irrigation, flood regulation and hydropower; Egypt remains overwhelmingly dependent upon the Nile for its freshwater supply. According to the World Bank, approximately 97 percent of Egypt's freshwater resources originate from the Nile, making fluctuations in the river's availability a direct national-security concern.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has therefore become the most visible expression of this underlying tension. Ethiopia officially inaugurated the dam in September 2025. With an installed generating capacity of approximately 5,150 MW, the project is intended to transform Ethiopia's electricity supply and provide the basis for increased industrialisation and regional power exports. For Addis Ababa, the GERD represents the sovereign right to utilise national resources for development. For Cairo, however, the question is not simply whether Ethiopia may generate electricity, but how the operation of a major upstream reservoir could affect the timing and reliability of downstream water flows.

The disagreement therefore reflects two competing interpretations of sovereignty. Ethiopia's position places emphasis on territorial sovereignty and the right of an upstream state to pursue economic development. Egypt's position emphasises the downstream consequences of upstream action and the necessity of predictable flows. Sudan occupies a more ambiguous

position, possessing interests that can align with either side depending upon the specific issue. This divergence makes the Nile dispute difficult to resolve through a simple allocation of fixed quantities of water.

The emergence of the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) has added another institutional dimension. The CFA entered into force on 13 October 2024 and established principles for cooperative management, sustainable development and harmonious utilisation of Nile resources rather than simply fixing numerical allocations for each state. The NBI is now entering a period of institutional transition in which the basin countries are considering the future development of the organisation and the establishment of a Nile River Basin Commission.

This transition is strategically important. It suggests that the future of Nile diplomacy may depend less on negotiating a single comprehensive settlement and more on creating institutions capable of continuously managing a changing hydrological environment. Climate variability, population growth, agricultural expansion and hydropower development mean that the political value of reliable information may become almost as important as the physical quantity of water itself. The NBI's recent emphasis on regional hydrological monitoring, drought and flood information and hydropower operations illustrates this evolution from traditional water-sharing diplomacy toward a broader system of water-security governance.

Egypt: Between Water Security and Agricultural Expansion

Egypt's position in the Nile dispute is strengthened by the country's extraordinary dependence upon the river, but it is also complicated by its own development strategy. Egypt is attempting simultaneously to protect its existing water resources and to expand the amount of agricultural land that can be brought into production.

This tension is particularly visible in the country's large-scale land-reclamation projects. Initiatives such as Toshka, East Oweinat and the New Delta seek to expand agricultural production into desert areas through irrigation, infrastructure and technological improvements. From Cairo's perspective, such projects are not merely agricultural policies. They form part of a broader strategy to reduce dependence upon food imports, increase domestic production

and redistribute population and economic activity away from the densely populated Nile Valley and Delta.

Yet expanding irrigated agriculture also means expanding demand for water. Egypt's development strategy consequently depends upon extracting greater economic value from a resource whose availability is already constrained. The World Bank has warned that climate change is increasing uncertainty concerning the timing and volume of Nile water available to Egypt and that, under a scenario of unchanged resources and population growth, the country could reach a threshold of extreme water scarcity during the 2030s.

The Toshka project illustrates the scale of this dilemma. Conceived as a major attempt to transfer Nile water into the Western Desert, it represents the effort to transform Egypt's physical geography through hydraulic infrastructure. The strategic logic is understandable: if population and agricultural demand continue to increase, Egypt must either increase productivity from existing water resources, develop alternative sources such as desalination and treated wastewater, or expand the territory in which water can be economically used.

Consequently, the Egyptian–Ethiopian dispute should not be reduced to a struggle between an upstream state demanding development and a downstream state demanding conservation. Both states are attempting to increase the economic value derived from the Nile. Ethiopia seeks to convert water into electricity and industrial capacity; Egypt seeks to convert water into food production and economic security.

The resulting competition is therefore partly a competition between different forms of water utilisation.

Sudan: The Strategic Hinge of the Nile and Red Sea

Sudan occupies a unique position in African water geopolitics because it connects several strategic systems that are frequently analysed separately. It is simultaneously a Nile Basin state, an agricultural power, a country with extensive groundwater resources, a Red Sea state and a neighbour of both Egypt and Ethiopia.

Its agricultural potential has attracted foreign investment for years, including investments associated with Gulf food-security strategies. Large-scale agricultural projects in Sudan have

been particularly significant because the country's land and water resources can potentially be connected to export infrastructure leading toward the Red Sea. This creates a strategic relationship between water, land, food production and maritime access.

The war that began in 2023 has severely disrupted this potential. More importantly, however, it has demonstrated that water security cannot be separated from energy and infrastructure security. Water treatment and distribution depend upon electricity, pumping stations and transport networks. When those systems are damaged, the existence of a major river does not guarantee access to safe water.

The current situation demonstrates this relationship. As of August 2026, Sudan continues to experience extensive power outages, with damage to electricity infrastructure, attacks and looting contributing to the disruption. Reuters reported that the conflict has affected key infrastructure including the Merowe dam and has severely complicated efforts to restore electricity generation.

The strategic implication extends beyond Sudan's humanitarian crisis. The destruction of infrastructure reduces the state's capacity to regulate and distribute water, weakens agricultural production and makes reconstruction dependent upon external financing. In such circumstances, control over infrastructure can become as important as control over the natural resource itself.

Sudan therefore illustrates a central principle of contemporary water security: water availability does not equal water security.

A state may possess substantial rivers and groundwater reserves while its population remains water insecure because the institutions and infrastructure necessary to access those resources have collapsed.

Sudan's position also makes it particularly important to the future of Egypt–Ethiopia diplomacy. A politically stable Sudan could potentially serve as an important intermediary and beneficiary of Nile cooperation. A Sudan fragmented by war, however, becomes less capable of participating effectively in basin-wide governance while simultaneously becoming more vulnerable to external influence.

The Sahel: Water Security and Regional Stability

The Sahel presents a different model of water geopolitics. Whereas the Nile dispute is dominated by large infrastructure projects and high-level interstate diplomacy, water insecurity in the Sahel is more closely connected to rural livelihoods, pastoralism, agriculture and local conflict.

The region's problem is again not simply an absence of water. Groundwater resources are considerable but remain unevenly accessible. FAO and the International Water Management Institute have identified significant potential for solar-powered irrigation using groundwater resources in countries including Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal. Solar pumping could reduce dependence upon expensive diesel and unreliable electricity grids, extending agricultural production into areas where surface water is limited.

This technological development could have major strategic consequences. More affordable pumping can strengthen food security and reduce the vulnerability of rural communities to rainfall variability. It can also permit farmers to cultivate land for longer periods and potentially reduce pressure on pastoral livelihoods.

But the same development creates a governance problem. If pumping becomes dramatically cheaper, groundwater extraction can increase faster than governments' capacity to monitor aquifers. FAO has therefore warned that the expansion of solar irrigation must be accompanied by appropriate regulation to prevent over-extraction.

The Sahel thus presents a paradox: technological progress may simultaneously reduce immediate water insecurity and create new long-term risks.

This is particularly important because groundwater rarely corresponds neatly to political boundaries. Aquifers extend beneath several countries, meaning that unilateral decisions concerning agricultural development can have consequences beyond the state in which extraction takes place.

For countries already affected by weak institutions, political instability and insecurity, this creates a difficult diplomatic challenge. Sustainable groundwater management requires long-

term data collection, cross-border information exchange and institutional trust the very capacities that are often weakened by political instability.

Lake Chad: Water Diplomacy in a Conflict Environment

The Lake Chad Basin provides perhaps the clearest example of the connection between water diplomacy and regional security.

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) brings together Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, Libya, Niger and Nigeria. Its mandate extends beyond water management to include peace, development and regional cooperation. The Commission's Water Charter establishes principles of integrated, equitable and coordinated management of shared water resources and explicitly places water governance within a broader framework of regional cooperation.

This is particularly significant because the Lake Chad Basin is simultaneously confronted by environmental pressures, agricultural and pastoral competition, population displacement and armed conflict. Water governance cannot therefore be separated from security policy.

The region also illustrates the limitations of the narrative that climate change alone causes conflict. Changes in rainfall and water availability may increase pressure on livelihoods, but whether that pressure becomes violent depends upon political institutions, land tenure, state capacity, local conflict-resolution mechanisms and the presence of armed groups.

The appropriate analytical framework is therefore one of risk multiplication. Water stress can increase competition over productive land; competition can intensify pre-existing social tensions; weakened institutions can make local disputes harder to resolve; and armed groups can exploit the resulting instability.

The Lake Chad Water Charter represents an attempt to create institutional mechanisms capable of managing these pressures. Its importance lies not only in regulating water, but in recognising that the management of shared resources can contribute to peace and regional stability.

Chad's accession to the UNECE Water Convention in 2018 further illustrates this diplomatic approach. Chad became the first African state to join the Convention, explicitly linking its accession to the need for cooperation over the Lake Chad and Niger basins and over shared groundwater resources.

The Lake Chad experience consequently offers an important lesson: water diplomacy can function as a form of preventive security policy.

The Hidden Geopolitics of Groundwater

The most strategically underappreciated dimension of African water security may be groundwater.

Rivers are visible. Dams can be photographed. Reservoir levels can be measured and publicly discussed. Groundwater is considerably more difficult to observe, quantify and regulate. Yet transboundary aquifers support populations across some of the most water-stressed areas of Africa.

The Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System is perhaps the clearest example. It extends beneath Chad, Egypt, Libya and Sudan and is one of the world's largest non-renewable groundwater systems. Much of its water is fossil groundwater accumulated during earlier climatic periods, meaning that its recharge is extremely limited in many areas.

This creates a fundamental difference from a river. A river can be replenished annually by rainfall within its basin. A fossil aquifer can contain enormous quantities of water while nevertheless being effectively finite on human timescales.

The four states have recognised this challenge and developed cooperative arrangements around the aquifer. A Strategic Action Programme agreed in 2013 sought to strengthen cooperation, improve monitoring and promote equitable utilisation, while a joint institutional mechanism has existed for several decades.

Academic research characterises this cooperation as an evolving framework based initially on procedural rules, data exchange and joint institutions. At the same time, researchers have

argued that the arrangement would benefit from stronger substantive rules governing utilisation and mechanisms for dispute settlement.

The importance of this distinction should not be underestimated. Data-sharing is an essential first step in groundwater diplomacy, but it does not by itself determine what constitutes a fair or sustainable level of extraction.

The Sahel's Transboundary Aquifers

A similar challenge exists farther west in the Iullemeden–Taoudéni/Tanezrouft region.

The Iullemeden Aquifer System is shared principally by Mali, Niger and Nigeria, while the broader transboundary system extends across a larger area of the Sahel and North Africa. In 2009, ministers from Mali, Niger and Nigeria adopted the Bamako Declaration, committing themselves to cooperation and establishing a consultative mechanism for the sustainable management of the shared aquifer.

This is an important example because it demonstrates that African states have not ignored groundwater diplomacy. Rather, they have increasingly recognised the need for institutions capable of managing resources that are invisible from the surface and that cannot be governed through conventional national boundaries.

UNESCO's current work on transboundary groundwater management similarly emphasises the need to develop cooperative cross-border frameworks, improved scientific information and more integrated approaches to groundwater governance. Its recent research programmes include Egypt, Sudan, Libya and other states affected by transboundary aquifer systems.

The challenge is that the governance of these resources remains dependent upon national political capacity. A consultative mechanism can provide a platform for dialogue, but effective management ultimately requires governments to regulate wells, monitor extraction, share data and notify neighbouring states about major development projects.

This is particularly difficult in politically unstable regions.

The International Legal Framework

The international legal framework governing transboundary aquifers has developed considerably, but remains less consolidated than the legal framework surrounding international rivers.

In 2008, the United Nations International Law Commission adopted 19 draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers. These establish principles including the sovereignty of aquifer states, equitable and reasonable utilisation, the obligation not to cause significant harm, cooperation, regular exchange of data and information, protection of ecosystems, monitoring and the development of bilateral and regional arrangements.

The principle of equitable and reasonable utilisation is particularly important. It does not provide a simple formula for dividing groundwater between states. Instead, the relevant factors include the needs of the states concerned, the effects of one state's utilisation upon another, the availability of alternatives, conservation requirements and the role of the aquifer within its wider ecosystem. The framework also gives particular consideration to vital human needs.

This flexibility is both a strength and a weakness.

It allows states to develop arrangements suited to the characteristics of individual aquifers. Yet it also leaves substantial room for disagreement over what constitutes reasonable utilisation or significant harm.

The problem is particularly acute for fossil aquifers. If a state increases extraction from a non-renewable resource, another state may not immediately experience measurable consequences. By the time regional drawdown becomes apparent, substantial economic and political interests may already depend upon the extraction.

Groundwater diplomacy must therefore become increasingly preventive rather than reactive.

External Powers, Investment and the Politics of Water

Although the central actors in African water geopolitics remain states, external powers and private investors increasingly influence how water is utilised.

The Gulf states are particularly important in this regard. Countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates face severe domestic constraints on agricultural water use and have consequently developed strategies for securing food supplies through overseas agricultural production and investment.

Egypt and Sudan are particularly attractive within this strategy because of their agricultural potential, access to water and proximity to Red Sea transport routes. UAE-linked investment in Sudanese agriculture, for example, has included plans connecting large-scale agricultural production with transport and port infrastructure. Such projects illustrate how agricultural investment can become part of a much broader strategic geography connecting land, water, food production and maritime logistics.

This does not necessarily constitute an illegitimate appropriation of water resources. Foreign capital can provide infrastructure, technology and employment, while agricultural development can increase food production. The diplomatic question is instead whether such investments are incorporated into transparent national water strategies and whether the interests of local populations and neighbouring states are adequately considered.

The same question applies to multinational corporations. Companies such as PepsiCo, Nestlé and Coca-Cola have increasingly invested in water-efficiency, watershed restoration and community water programmes in African countries. Their activities demonstrate that water governance is becoming increasingly multi-actor. Nevertheless, corporations remain fundamentally different from states: they may influence water use through investment and supply chains, but they do not possess the same legal responsibility for managing transboundary resources.

The emergence of these actors therefore strengthens rather than diminishes the importance of state diplomacy. Governments must determine the conditions under which external capital

operates and ensure that national development strategies do not undermine long-term regional water security.

Water Security and European Strategic Interests

The consequences of African water insecurity are unlikely to remain confined to the regions in which scarcity occurs.

The relationship between water stress and migration should not be presented in deterministic terms. Most people affected by drought or water insecurity do not automatically migrate internationally. Nevertheless, water stress can interact with agricultural losses, food insecurity, poverty, conflict and weak governance to increase displacement and reduce the resilience of communities.

This is particularly relevant in the Sahel. Where rural livelihoods depend upon seasonal rainfall, grazing and access to groundwater, prolonged environmental stress can intensify competition over productive territory. Where national institutions are weak, local disputes may become more difficult to resolve. Where armed groups are present, these tensions can be exploited for recruitment, territorial control or taxation.

The resulting displacement can occur in stages: from rural areas to towns, from towns to neighbouring states and eventually, for a smaller proportion of affected populations, toward North Africa and Europe.

Water security should therefore be considered within the broader European security relationship with Africa. European policy toward the Sahel has traditionally concentrated on migration management, counterterrorism, development assistance and political stabilisation. Yet water and food security increasingly intersect with all of these objectives.

For Europe, supporting African water diplomacy should consequently not be understood only as humanitarian assistance. Strengthening basin institutions, hydrological monitoring, groundwater governance, irrigation efficiency and regional dispute-resolution mechanisms can also contribute to conflict prevention and long-term regional stability.

This is particularly relevant as the European Union seeks to maintain strategic relationships with African states at a time when European influence in parts of the Sahel has become more contested. Water cooperation offers one area in which long-term mutual interests may provide a basis for diplomacy even when relations in other policy areas become more difficult.

From Water Scarcity to Water Diplomacy

The cases examined above demonstrate that Africa's water crisis cannot be understood solely through the language of scarcity.

In Ethiopia, water is inseparable from the pursuit of energy and economic development. In Egypt, it is linked to food security and national survival. In Sudan, the destruction of infrastructure demonstrates the dependence of water security upon political stability and energy systems. In the Lake Chad Basin, water governance is directly connected to regional peace and security. Across the Sahel and North Africa, transboundary aquifers reveal a less visible but increasingly important dimension of interstate resource management.

These cases also demonstrate that there is no single model of African water diplomacy.

The Nile requires mechanisms capable of reconciling upstream development with downstream security. Lake Chad requires institutions that combine resource management with peacebuilding and regional security. Transboundary aquifers require scientific cooperation, data-sharing and long-term planning. Each case therefore requires institutions adapted to the particular characteristics of the resource and the political environment in which it is situated.

The central challenge is that hydrological systems operate according to geographical realities that do not correspond to political borders. A state can control the territory above an aquifer or the upstream section of a river, but it cannot entirely control the consequences of its actions beyond its borders.

This makes cooperation not merely desirable but structurally necessary.

The future of African water security will therefore depend increasingly upon the quality of the continent's diplomatic institutions. Basin organisations such as the Nile Basin Initiative and Lake Chad Basin Commission provide important foundations, while agreements concerning shared aquifers demonstrate that states can develop mechanisms for managing even highly complex underground resources. The challenge now is to strengthen these mechanisms before rising demand and climatic uncertainty make cooperation more difficult.

Conclusion

Water is unlikely to become geopolitically important in Africa at some distant point in the future. It already is.

The strategic transformation underway is instead a shift from water as a development concern toward water as a central component of national and regional security. The Nile demonstrates how water can become a source of interstate competition between states pursuing fundamentally different development objectives. The Sahel demonstrates how water insecurity can interact with food insecurity, pastoral competition, displacement and political instability. Sudan demonstrates how the destruction of infrastructure can transform abundant natural resources into inaccessible ones. Meanwhile, the continent's transboundary aquifers reveal a more gradual but potentially profound challenge: resources accumulated over geological timescales are increasingly being incorporated into national agricultural and development strategies without equivalent mechanisms for regulating their long-term use.

The principal diplomatic challenge is consequently not to determine which country “owns” Africa's water. It is to develop institutions capable of managing resources that no state can completely control.

For Egypt and Ethiopia, this means moving beyond the binary logic of upstream versus downstream and toward mechanisms capable of managing hydrological variability, droughts, floods and hydropower operations over the long term. For Sudan, rebuilding water and energy infrastructure will be inseparable from restoring state capacity. For the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, strengthening regional water institutions could contribute simultaneously to

agricultural resilience, conflict prevention and human security. For transboundary aquifers, systematic data-sharing and joint monitoring will become increasingly important before irreversible depletion occurs.

The involvement of external powers, development banks and private investors will also continue to expand. Their capital can help address Africa's enormous infrastructure deficit, but it must operate within transparent national and regional water strategies. Otherwise, the increasing economic value of water could produce new forms of competition over land, agriculture and infrastructure rather than cooperation.

Ultimately, Africa's water future will be determined as much in ministries, regional organisations and diplomatic negotiations as it will be by rainfall and climate. The strategic question is therefore no longer simply whether Africa has enough water. It is whether African states can develop the political institutions necessary to govern water collectively.

From the groundwater beneath the Sahel to the waters of the Nile, the future of African water security will increasingly be a question of diplomacy, sovereignty and power.