Under the Danube Canopy: The Future of International Waterway Law

Michael A. Hyman
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INTRODUCTION

Regulating the use of international waterways is a source of substantial conflict among a great many nations. The process of creating a uniform set of laws to govern international waterways is stymied by contradictory ideologies of autonomous states. Why is it so important to regulate these waterways? The first and foremost reason is that a river is a "hydrologic unit." This means that water use upstream has a direct effect downstream, and vice versa. To illustrate this point, consider the effect of substantial irrigation and hydroelectric projects by upstream inhabitants (upper riparians). These projects will reduce the flow to those people living and working downstream (lower riparians). Conversely, if lower riparians were to construct a dam to regulate water flow, the rate of water flow upriver would be affected.

To describe this circumstance in economic terms, international water resources are considered to be "common-pool" resources. Purely public goods are goods that are nonexcludable and nonrival. On the other end of the spectrum are private goods, which are fully excludable and rival. In between purely public and purely private goods, two other types of goods exist: impure public goods, which are nonexcludable yet

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2 See id.
3 See id. at 505-06.
4 See id. at 506.
6 See id. "They are nonexcludable because it is impossible or prohibitively costly to prevent outsiders from gaining access to them." Id.
7 See id. "They are nonrival because a user’s consumption of a unit of that good does not detract from its benefits to others. Thus, the neighbor who cleans the sidewalk provides a public good that each pedestrian enjoys without diminishing the enjoyment of others." Id.
8 See id. "The user may prevent others from using it and the consumption of any part detracts from the whole." Id.
rival; and common-pool resources, which are partially excludable and rival. This note is concerned only with the latter. International rivers and waterways fit within the common-pool resource classification: the benefits of common-pool resources "are partially excludable . . . . [N]onriparians have no access to the water resources and cannot benefit from them directly. Their benefits are also rival, since any unit of water diverted or polluted by one riparian reduces the amount available to the other riparians or its quality."

In other words, upper riparians may exclude lower riparians from the waterway, and upper riparians also may use the waterway in a manner that is harmful to downstream uses or users. Thus, international waterways are susceptible to the "tragedy of the commons" problem, in which each of the users receives direct benefits from its unilateral act, while the costs are spread to all.

The danger that waterway use by one state will have a detrimental effect upon another state is heightened as one considers that as the world population grows, the supply of international river water will be diminished. Increased use of freshwater leaves those downstream with less water to use. In addition, massive industrial growth, especially in developing countries, will lead to an increased danger of pollution. Taken together, these factors demonstrate the importance, and indeed, the necessity, of meaningful regulation of international waterways.

This note describes the effects of growing problems, such as

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9 See id.
10 Id.
11 See id.
12 Garrett Hardin, The Tragedy of the Commons, 162 SCI. 1243, 1244 (1968). The "tragedy of the commons" is the economic principle that demonstrates that self-interests overpower community interests in regards to a common area owned by all. See id.
13 See Benvenisti, supra note 5, at 388.
population growth, upon the use of shared waterways; describes the problems of enforcement and implementation of environmental international law; analyzes the impacts of the International Court of Justice's recent decision concerning the on-going dispute between Hungary and Slovakia over the common use of the Danube River; and argues that the strict sovereignty-based ideologies of nations, if perpetuated, will prevent efficient resolutions of international disputes regarding waterway usage.

Part I follows the evolution of customary international watercourse law and describes some of the competing ideologies regarding these watercourses. Part I begins with a brief history of international watercourse law beginning with Roman Law. Then, the modern approaches to this subject, namely the sovereignty and integrity theories, are examined and scrutinized. This section then delves into the present leading theory, a theory labeled *sic utere,*\(^{18}\) and examines the sources that secure *sic utere's* role in international law.

Part II describes the four prominent methods available to solve international watercourse disputes and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. The four methods to be discussed are: (1) general/customary international law; (2) multilateral treaties and negotiation; (3) international institutions; and (4) third party settlement. The three principal systems of third party settlement that will be scrutinized are mediation, arbitration, and adjudication.

Part III reviews a recent dispute involving international waterway law, the Gabcikovo-Nagymaros project dispute between Slovakia and Hungary. This discussion illustrates how well some of the dispute resolution methods addressed in Part II actually work, and what direction international watercourse law is heading in the future.

I. THE EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL WATERWAY LAW

A. Origins of Customary International Waterway Law

Roman law showed little interest in the direct management of

\(^{18}\) *Sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas* is a common law principle that "one should use his own property in such a manner as not to injure others." Lazerwitz, *supra* note 16, at 251 n.16 (quoting Chapman v. Bennett, 169 N.E. 2d 212, 214 (1960). It generally stands for the proposition that a nation must not use resources within its territory in a fashion that adversely affects the rights of other nations. *See* Eckstein, *supra* note 14, at 75.
water resources. The role of the state was basically limited to protecting navigation:

Any riparian owner, or anybody who could prove long-standing open use, could use the water of a stream as long as that use did not infringe upon the right of others or impair navigation. The role of the state was limited to protecting navigation, and any use that conflicted with navigation was forbidden.

"Roman law designated the air, the oceans, the seashore, running water and ocean fish as res communes, or as incapable of private ownership but as open to the free use of all." Thus, under Roman law, the lack of direct regulation of waterway uses left a substantial amount of power to custom in the determination of water use distribution among riparian landowners.

English common law did not follow the res communes approach of Roman law. The King assumed dominion and control of waterways. However, the jus publicum, or public’s right of use, could not be restricted, even by the King. English law advocated an approach that would allow a riparian owner to use the water for "ordinary purposes," such as for the needs of his livestock. This approach was without limitation; the upper riparian owner could consume the water supply entirely. In addition, the common law permitted water use for "extraordinary purposes" if the use was reasonable and the user restored the water to a level "substantially undiminished in volume and unaltered in character."

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20 Id.
22 See Teclaff, supra note 19, at 63.
23 See SELVIN, supra note 21, at 25.
24 See id. The King had the power to order the removal of all nuisances, charter passenger ferries, and authorize construction of port facilities. See id. at 25-26.
25 See id. at 26.
26 See Teclaff, supra note 19, at 64 (citing a 1926 English Court of Chancery decision, Attwood v. Llay Main Collieries, Ltd., Ch. 444, 458 (1926)).
27 See id.
28 Id.
The English common law doctrine promoted flexibility, but fostered unpredictability and uncertainty, as well.\(^2\) In response, states west of the Mississippi River began to get more involved and issue permits to users.\(^3\) States east of the Mississippi eventually began to follow suit.\(^4\) Thus, the common law failed to eliminate the need for administrative authorization and a system of administrative allocation of water replaced the common law.\(^5\)

American common law pertaining to the usage of waterways by the public developed from the English common law.\(^6\) By the 1820’s, differences between the American and English common law began to emerge.\(^7\) One example of American deviation from English common law concerns the denial of private property ownership of rivers.\(^8\) Although English law recognized that the public had a right of passage, it also allowed private ownership of river banks and river beds.\(^9\) American courts, perhaps due to economic considerations and geographic differences between the U.S. and England, deviated from English common law and ruled that rivers could not be privately owned.\(^10\) However, despite this example and similar deviations from English common law, a large portion of American common law and modern customary practices grew from the attitudes and ideologies underlying English common law.\(^11\)

While this section has dealt with national law, it should be noted that international law has followed a similar development in relation to international waterways.\(^12\)

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\(^2\) See id.
\(^3\) See id. at 64-65.
\(^4\) See id.
\(^5\) See Teclaff, supra note 19, at 65.
\(^6\) See SELVIN, supra note 21, at 26-27.
\(^7\) See id. at 31.
\(^8\) See id. at 32-36.
\(^9\) See id. at 33. “The riparian proprietor ... held the exclusive right of fishery to the center of the stream, and was entitled to compensation for damages to the enjoyment of his property caused by construction designed to improve navigation.” Id.
\(^10\) See id. at 32-36.
\(^11\) See id. at 38.
\(^12\) See Albert E. Utton, International Water Quality Law, in INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW 154, 158 (Ludwik A. Teclaff & Albert E. Utton eds., 1974).
B. Modern Waterway Law: Balancing the Tension Between Absolute Sovereignty and Absolute Territorial Integrity

Modern international waterway law stems from the consideration of two divergent theories of waterway usage, absolute territorial sovereignty and absolute territorial integrity.\footnote{See Eckstein, supra note 14, at 73-75.}

Absolute territorial sovereignty theory, often asserted by upper riparian states, insists that the state is the “master of its own territory,” and may use the watercourse as necessary without regard for any other riparian state.\footnote{See Cohen, supra note 1, at 522. See also, Tadros, supra note 16, at 1101-02.}

This theory is often referred to as the Harmon Doctrine.\footnote{See Stephen C. McCaffrey, The Harmon Doctrine One Hundred Years Later: Buried, Not Praised, 36 NAT. RESOURCES J. 965, 967 (“This opinion has become so synonymous with the doctrine of absolute territorial sovereignty that it now stands as the doctrine’s cornerstone, if not its entire foundation”). For a general history of the origin of the Harmon Doctrine, see id. at 968-97.} The Harmon Doctrine emanates from a U.S.-Mexico dispute over the Rio Grande.\footnote{The Rio Grande flows roughly 1,885 miles, 1,240 of which form the border between the United States and Mexico. See id. at 968 (citing 24 ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA 1023 (1987)).} The controversy arose in the late nineteenth century, when Mexico alerted the United States that several Mexican communities were on the brink of annihilation because of the United States’ practice of seizing water from the Rio Grande.\footnote{See id. at 969.} U.S. Attorney General Judson Harmon was called upon by the U.S. Secretary of State, Richard Olney, to determine the legal rights of the United States.\footnote{See id. at 973.} His conclusion was that “the rules, principles and precedents of international law impose no liability or obligation on the United States” to allow the river to flow unhindered into Mexico.\footnote{21 Op. Att’y Gen. 274, 283 (1895). See Cohen, supra note 1, at 522; McCaffrey, supra note 42, at 984; Clyde Haberman, Sanliurfa Journal: Dam is Watering Hope for a New Fertile Crescent, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 30, 1990, at A4.} Thus, it is understandable that Harmon’s opinion, declaring the United States’ right of territorial sovereignty entitled it to use the water resources within its territory without limitation, became intertwined with absolute sovereignty.\footnote{See McCaffrey, supra note 42, at 979.}

This theory of absolute sovereignty has, for the most part, been
rejected as impractical, given its potential effect upon other nations. One possible explanation for the softening of sovereignty is that the “traditional ability of national governments to control events within their territorial boundaries is being challenged by major new transboundary forces such as transnational corporations, economic globalization and trade, international crime and the rise of global communications and other technologies.” In any case, the general perception of river management has clearly shifted from exploitation of the water to sustainable development.

Directly opposed to the absolute sovereignty ideology is the theory of absolute territorial integrity. This theory advocates the belief that a riparian state may not utilize an international river in a way that will harm another riparian state. One can easily see why this is the favored theory among lower riparians. Like absolute sovereignty, absolute integrity “fail[s] to recognize reciprocal sovereign rights or shared interests.” Accordingly, this theory has also received a great deal of scholarly criticism and has been rejected due to its inequitable distribution of responsibility and benefits.

C. Compromise: Limited Territorial Sovereignty and Limited Integrity of the River (Sic Utere)

Modern international waterway law centers around a compromise between the absolute sovereignty and absolute territorial integrity theorems. This compromise falls under the legal principle of sic utere. Under this principle, a state is obligated not to use, or allow the use of, its

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48 See id. at 1007 (“States do not, and cannot, exist in isolation”); Tadros, supra note 16, at 1102.
51 See Cohen, supra note 1, at 523.
54 See Eckstein, supra note 14, at 75.
55 See supra note 18 and accompanying text.
territory for acts contrary to the rights of other states. If interpreted literally, *sic utere* would seem to advocate the absolute integrity approach. However, in practice, *sic utere* has not been applied in such an inflexible manner. Instead, the common law recognizes *sic utere* as a broad principle that demands that the user must balance the negative effects of his actions against the benefits obtained. In other words, the substance of *sic utere* is a delicate conflict between the "equitable utilization" and "no harm" rules.

"Equitable utilization" can be considered as a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis—each riparian is entitled to a reasonable and equitable share in the beneficial uses of an international water resource. Thus, equitable utilization allows detrimental use of water resources so long as the benefits of the activity outweigh the harm caused by the activity. The "no harm" rule, on the other hand, is a *per se* rule that obligates each state not to cause harm to another.

The two principles generate conflict because under equitable utilization, a use that causes significant harm may be permitted in certain instances, whereas the no harm rule disallows any use that significantly harms another. The role of international law is to clear up this conflict and provide guidance for state planning regarding the use of international waterways.

Notwithstanding the great burden of integrating these two principles, both the International Law Association (ILA) and the

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56 See Eckstein, supra note 14, at 75.
57 See Utton, supra note 39, at 158.
58 See id.
59 See Eckstein, supra note 14, at 78-79.
60 See id.
62 See Wouters, supra note 15, at 420.
64 Established in 1873, the ILA is a non-governmental organization of legal experts. See Michelle R. Sergent, *Comparison of the Helsinki Rules to the 1994 U.N. Draft Articles: Will the Progression of International Watercourse Law Be Dammed?*, 8 VILL. ENVTL. L.J. 435, 447 (1997). In 1954, the ILA formed a committee to study the law regarding transboundary water resources, which led to the adoption of the Helsinki Rules. See id.
International Law Commission (ILC)\textsuperscript{65} have attempted to codify the \textit{sic utter} rule.

The ILA's Helsinki Rules\textsuperscript{66} require states to "take all appropriate measures to prevent, control and reduce any transboundary impact."\textsuperscript{67} The term "transboundary impact" is defined broadly.\textsuperscript{68} The ILC's Draft Articles\textsuperscript{69} attempt to integrate the "equitable utilization" and "no harm" principles through two separate articles.\textsuperscript{70} Article 5 maintains that states shall "utilize an international watercourse in an equitable and reasonable manner."\textsuperscript{71} Article 7 contains the "no harm" provision: "Watercourse States shall exercise due diligence to utilize an international watercourse in such a way as not to cause significant harm to other watercourse States."\textsuperscript{72} Although these Articles seem to conflict, Article 7 appears to control,\textsuperscript{73} rendering equitable utilization merely a factor to be considered in


\textsuperscript{67} Id. at 1315.

\textsuperscript{68} See id. at 1314-15. "Transboundary impact" is defined as:

[A]ny significant adverse effect on the environment resulting from a change in the conditions of transboundary waters caused by a human activity, the physical origin of which is situated wholly or in part within an area under the jurisdiction of a Party, within an area under the jurisdiction of another Party. Such effects on the environment include effects on human health and safety, flora, fauna, soil, air, water, climate, landscape and historical monuments or other physical structures or the interaction among these factors; they also include effects on the cultural heritage or socio-economic conditions resulting from alterations to those factors.


\textsuperscript{70} See Wouters, \textit{supra} n.ote 15, at 421-23.

\textsuperscript{71} Draft Articles, \textit{supra} note 69, art. 5(1).

\textsuperscript{72} Id. art. 7(1).

\textsuperscript{73} See Wouters, \textit{supra} note 15, at 423. Violation of due diligence occurs if the State knows or ought to know that the "particular use of an international watercourse would cause significant harm to other watercourse States." \textit{Id.}
consultations where significant harm has occurred.74 Thus, under the Draft Articles, a state may utilize a waterway only if it knows or ought to know that such use will not cause significant harm to another state.75 Other multi-lateral agreements also recognize the principle of *sic utere*, including Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration76 and Principle 2 of the Rio Declaration.77

This notion of *sic utere* has been recognized and upheld in many international adjudication and arbitration cases, such as the *Island of Palmas* case,78 the *Trail Smelter* case,79 and the *Corfu Channel* case.80 In *Trail Smelter*, the United States brought suit against Canada for damage to U.S. crops resulting from air pollution from a Canadian smelting operation in British Columbia.81 By agreement of the parties, the case was submitted to an arbitration tribunal, which found that:

> **[U]nder the principles of international law . . . no State has the right to use or permit the use of its territory in such a manner as to cause injury by fumes in or to the territory of another or the properties or persons therein, when the case is of serious consequence and the injury is**

74 See id. at 423-24.
75 See id. at 423.
76 The Stockholm Declaration notes:
States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principle of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.
established by clear and convincing evidence.  

This decision has been read as an acknowledgement of the obligation between nations to protect transboundary resources. Trail Smelter also demonstrates another facet of sic utere, the requirement that the harm caused must be “significant” or “substantial,” meaning that the “injury must have a significant and consequential effect upon public health, economic productivity, or the environment of another state.” The relevant language in Trail Smelter requires a case of “serious consequence” and that “the injury [be] established by clear and convincing evidence.”

The Island of Palmas case also evinces the acceptance of the sic utere principle in customary international law. This case arose out of a dispute between the United States and the Netherlands regarding the sovereign rights over the island of Palmas, off the Philippine coast.

The Corfu Channel case involved a dispute between Great Britain and Albania over Albania’s placement of mines in the Corfu Channel. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) held that customary international law dictates that ships of all nations have the right to navigate “through straits used for international navigation between two parts of the high seas without the previous authorization of a coastal State, provided that the passage is innocent.” The italicized portion of the excerpt demonstrates that the ICJ took the ‘no harm’ rule into account while balancing the asserted interests of the parties.

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83 See Khakee, supra note 81, at 852.
84 Draft Articles, supra note 69, at 236.
85 Eckstein, supra note 14, at 77-78, n.33 (noting the comment to Article Ten of the Helsinki Rules provides “an injury is considered ‘substantial’ if it materially interferes with or prevents a reasonable use of the water”).
86 Id. at 78.
In the Lake Lanoux arbitration decision, the court upheld "the sovereignty in its own territory of a State desirous of carrying out hydroelectric developments" but acknowledged "the correlative duty not to injure the interests of a neighboring state," thus firmly establishing the principle of sic utere in case law.

II. SOLVING INTERNATIONAL WATERWAY DISPUTES

This section describes the four modern resolution methods available for international disputes, provides examples of modern usage of these methods, and reveals the problems and criticisms associated with these schemes.

A. Customary International Law

General or customary international law as illustrated above is an essential part of solving international waterway disputes. However, standing alone, custom is not binding on states. For international custom to reach the level of law, it must satisfy the requirement of opinio juris, which occurs when all nations agree to be bound legally to that custom. Therefore, even though sic utere is a widely accepted theory, the persistence of some countries in clinging to the principles of absolute sovereignty and absolute territorial integrity, among other theories, prevents this principle from becoming binding international law.

B. Multilateral Treaties and Negotiation

As noted above, many multilateral treaties have promoted the use

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91 Lake Lanoux Arbitration (Spain v. Fr.), 24 I.L.R. 101 (Arbitral Trib. 1957) [hereinafter Lake Lanoux].
92 Id. at 111-12.
93 See Lazerwitz, supra note 16, at 251-52.
95 See Khakee, supra note 81, at 875. Implicit in the notion of opinio juris are two conditions: The collective actions amount to a settled practice and that they are carried out in a manner that evidences a belief that the practice is obligatory by existing laws requiring it. See LOUIS HENKIN ET AL., INTERNATIONAL LAW: CASES AND MATERIALS 64 (1st ed. 1980).
96 See Khakee, supra note 81, at 875.
However, unless all affected parties join the agreement, its effect may be limited. For example, the ILA’s status as an unofficial organization undermines the enforceability of the Helsinki Rules. The ILA’s status renders its resolutions legally unenforceable in international law unless they are adopted in the form of multilateral convention or become the domestic law in the particular state. The same is true for the ILC’s Draft Articles. Unlike the Helsinki Rules, however, the attention that the Draft Articles have received in the international community, “as well as the fact that they were prepared by a respected United Nations expert commission, will make it more difficult for states to ignore [the rules] or challenge their existence.”

Generally, the Helsinki Rules and Draft Articles “provide no binding enforcement mechanism but instead are designed to show mutual awareness of environmental concerns and to express good faith efforts to control and contain environmental damage between countries.” States are hesitant to enter into strict binding agreements, because, in doing so, they surrender a very significant asset, discretion. States are accustomed to an enormous degree of discretion, and therefore tend to avoid the risk of subverting their interests to the benefit of another state’s interests.

Nonetheless, negotiations in the form of multilateral treaties or bilateral agreements are central to promote stable cohabitation among states sharing a specific resource. It is important for the countries involved to reach an agreement that allows them to coexist peacefully. Because of the need to coexist, an all-or-nothing ruling, even if the most

99 See id.
102 Glinka, supra note 63, at 130-31.
103 See id. at 131-32.
104 See id.
105 See id. at 135-36.
106 See id.
equitable solution, may not be the best solution for the countries involved. After all, an unsatisfied participant may turn to war before accepting an unfavorable decision. In addition, negotiations open channels for communication between the states involved.

Multilateral agreements promote solutions to international disputes by establishing flexible guidelines that permit states to reach an agreement themselves instead of facing the risks involved with unpredictable litigation.

C. International Institutions

Another method of international dispute resolution to be discussed is the formation of international institutions. International institutions are comprised of representatives of the states involved in the dispute. These institutions are often made up of a team of scientists and low-level politicians of the affected states. The interaction between the individuals of the separate states, standing alone, is a possible benefit. This interaction may “depoliticize cooperation and break down political barriers to it.”

The problem of state reluctance to concede its sovereign powers is not an issue for international institutions. The true effectiveness of international institutions lies in the establishment of communication, mutual monitoring, and interaction between the states. These institutions can also provide a benefit by disseminating information to the public. This process allows public pressure to become a key factor in domestic decision making. While the addition of more public involvement may seem to be a desirable end, in practice it may be an impediment to governmental endorsement of international institutions. This presents problems similar to those surrounding strict enforcement

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107 See id.
108 See Glinka, supra note 63, at 135, 136 n.48.
109 See id. at 136; Benvenisti, supra note 5, at 400-01.
110 See Benvenisti, supra note 5, at 402.
111 See id. at 411.
112 See id. at 412.
113 See id.
114 Id.
115 See id.
116 See id.
117 See id.
mechanisms: the government would be sacrificing one of its critical powers, the power to decide what information the public needs and does not need to know.

D. Third Party Settlement

The Trail Smelter and Lake Lanoux Arbitration cases\textsuperscript{118} are examples of the contribution third party settlements have advanced. This note discusses three main forms of third party international dispute resolution techniques: (1) mediation; (2) arbitration; and (3) adjudication.

1. Mediation

Mediation is similar to negotiation, but includes an "independent and objective third party who guides the parties toward agreement."\textsuperscript{119} The purpose of mediation is to bring the parties to a consensus on crucial and significant issues.\textsuperscript{120} Because the mediator is independent and objective, communications can be more open.\textsuperscript{121} However, communications may break down because states will be reluctant to reveal all relevant information unless the state is certain the information cannot be used against it in later proceedings.\textsuperscript{122} Another drawback of mediation is that it is not binding.\textsuperscript{123} The parties cannot be forced to agree on a specific issue.\textsuperscript{124}

2. Arbitration

Arbitration may facilitate a dispute resolution if negotiation or mediation fail to bring about an agreement.\textsuperscript{125} Arbitration is very similar to mediation in that a third party is introduced to facilitate agreement between the parties.\textsuperscript{126} However, an arbiter’s decision is binding upon the

\textsuperscript{118} See supra notes 79-87, 91-93 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{119} Glinka, supra note 63, at 138.
\textsuperscript{120} See id. at 138-39.
\textsuperscript{121} See id. at 139.
\textsuperscript{122} See Michael F. Hoellering, World Trade to Arbitrate or Mediate—That is the Question, DISP. RESOL. J., Mar. 1994, at 67, 68.
\textsuperscript{123} See id.
\textsuperscript{124} See id.
\textsuperscript{125} See Glinka, supra note 63, at 140.
\textsuperscript{126} See BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 105 (6th ed. 1990).
The arbiter is normally a member of an official institution that offers its services to businesses (and countries). These institutions can be categorized into different groups: public and private; national and international; and general and specialized institutions. The success of these arbitration institutions has varied.

Arbitration has a key advantage in that if it is used often, the resulting decisions establish a source of legal principles and precedents. Other advantages include: enforceability of arbitral awards, impartiality of decision maker, confidentiality, technical expertise, discovery, expense, familiarity, predictability, and party participation. However, arbitration does have two notable disadvantages. One

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127 See id.
128 See RENE DAVID, ARBITRATION IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE 38 (1985).
129 See id. at 40-48.
130 See id.
132 See Grier, supra note 131, at 11 ("Arbitration awards can be challenged under very limited circumstances."); James H. Carter, Dispute Resolution and International Agreements, in INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL AGREEMENTS, at 405, 409 (PLI Commercial Law and Practice Course Handbook Series No. 703, 1994) ("The resulting award will be subject to relatively little risk of being set aside or altered by a court.").
133 See Grier, supra note 131, at 11.
134 See id. ("Arbitrations and awards are normally private; court proceedings and judgments are public.").
135 See id. ("Parties may choose arbitrators with technical backgrounds."); cf. Carter, supra note 132, at 409 ("[A]t least in theory, the arbitrators will have applicable specialized commercial and legal expertise.").
136 See Grier, supra note 131, at 11 ("Because discovery is limited in an arbitration, it is less burdensome.").
137 See id. ("Arbitration is usually less expensive than litigation"); cf. Carter, supra note 132, at 410 ("There are usually no costly depositions in arbitration, reducing costs somewhat, but since arbitrators must be paid, the cost may be ultimately as high as litigation (or even higher)."").
138 See Grier, supra note 131, at 12 ("Parties are often unfamiliar with foreign legal systems.").
139 See Carter, supra note 132, at 409 ("The dispute will be resolved in one place and not by a race to judgement in the courts of two nations.").
140 See id. ("The procedures often are shaped by the parties as well as the arbitrators, rather than dictated by detailed rules as in litigation."). See also Hoellering, supra note 122, at 67.
disadvantage is that the process may be slow because the parties must agree on the specific focus of the debate and on the arbitrators themselves. The second problem has been mentioned above: states are reluctant to surrender their sovereign powers to have a third party settle a dispute.

3. Adjudication

The third major form of third party dispute settlement is adjudication. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) was designed to adjudicate international disputes. The ICJ is the principle judicial organ of the United Nations. The court has jurisdiction in two possible cases. The first type of case that the Court has jurisdiction over is "incidental matters." This jurisdiction is derived by statute—once a country becomes a member of the United Nations or a party to the statute, that state agrees to the exercise of jurisdiction in accordance with the statute.

The second type of jurisdiction that the ICJ possesses is quite different and generates much criticism of both the Court’s importance and its ability to settle disputes. This jurisdiction is called “mainline jurisdiction,” and it differs from “incidental jurisdiction” in that the parties involved must give their consent to ICJ jurisdiction. In other words, the parties must agree to be bound by the Court’s decision. The fact that the parties must agree to a binding decision raises the same concerns addressed above: states do not want to sacrifice their sovereignty to the “win-lose” nature of third party resolution or, in this case, the

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141 See Glinka, supra note 63, at 142-43; Carter, supra note 132, at 411.
142 See supra notes 71-72, 87 and accompanying text.
143 See Glinka, supra note 63, at 146.
145 See id. at 308.
146 See id.
148 Ferrante, supra note 144, at 308.
149 Id.
150 See id. at 309.
"Litigation is not designed to produce a mutually acceptable solution to the parties involved." Hence, most states prefer diplomatic negotiation to the risk of losing everything in one decision. There are, however, several advantages to bringing a dispute before the ICJ:

Disputes can be removed from the political arena where negotiations often become bogged down. A decision by the ICJ also promises finality to the disputed issue and deflects some of the criticism from governments for unpopular or unfavorable solutions. Further, it establishes legal standards and precedents that become part of a body of international environmental law.

The first and third points of this excerpt are greatly, if not completely, correct. The first point is certainly true. The ICJ may be an excellent alternative to negotiation when the parties cannot settle their differences. The third point concerning the establishment of precedent, although not strictly accurate, may be deemed accurate through practice. The Court is not bound by precedent, due to Article 59 of the Statute of the ICJ. However, the Court is "likely to draw on its previous jurisprudence."

On the other hand, the assertion that "[a] decision by the ICJ also promises finality to the disputed issue and deflects some of the criticism from governments for unpopular or unfavorable solutions," can be attacked on both counts. Seemingly, the "deflection of criticism" aspect of the excerpt is not accurate, as the government could still be criticized for

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151 See Glinka, supra note 63, at 147. See also Ferrante, supra note 144, at 311 ("[N]ations have been unwilling to limit their sovereignty to the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court. Nations are unwilling to consume time and resources adjudicating matters that are of secondary importance. Nor are they willing to risk adjudicating matters of primary importance in a non-domestic court.").

152 Ferrante, supra note 144, at 311.

153 See id.

154 Glinka, supra note 63, at 147-48.


156 See 59 Stat. 1031, 1062; Simpson, supra note 155, at 332.

157 Simpson, supra note 155, at 333.

158 Glinka, supra note 63, at 148.
entering into an unfavorable binding third party dispute decision. The "finality of the disputed issue" may be questioned as well. An implied obligation that the ICJ's decisions will be followed in good faith exists. Further, if a nation fails to comply with the decision of the Court, the matter may be referred to the UN Security Council, which will decide how to handle the matter.

However, this type of enforcement of ICJ decisions is not foolproof, as demonstrated in a case between Nicaragua and the United States, in which "[t]he United States refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Court or to accept the decisions in the case. When the matter was referred to the Security Council, a negative vote by the United States prevented the adoption of any resolution by the Security Council." Thus, although the ICJ's decisions are "binding" and "final," enforcement problems exist, and states may be able to avoid compliance. This occurrence also demonstrates another problem of enforcement. Many observers of the Court believe that the credibility of the Court is "threatened by the possibility of nonenforcement or judicial partiality." Thus, developing countries, for example, would seem less likely to enter into the Court's jurisdiction for fear that the Court may be in some way partial to the developed country, and vice versa. Hence, in practice, "political factors have often determined what matters are deemed justiciable by the Court . . . . [and] some issues are simply too political for resolution at the I.C.J."

Certain limitations on the ICJ have led some to comment that "the ICJ is not well suited to resolve environmental and natural resource disputes." Appearances before the International Court of Justice are limited to nations, even though the groups that are the most willing and best equipped to do so may be various other agencies or international

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159 See Ferrante, supra note 144, at 311.
160 See id.
161 See id. at 310.
162 See id.
163 Id.
164 See id.
165 Simpson, supra note 155, at 330. See, e.g., Thomas M. Franck, Judging the World Court (1986).
166 Simpson, supra note 155, at 330.
167 Paul R. Williams, Can International Legal Principles Play a Positive Role in Resolving Central and East European Transboundary Environmental Disputes?, 7 GEO. INT'L ENVTL. L. REV. 421, 457 (1995) [hereinafter Williams, International Legal Principles].
Also among the problems facing the ICJ are the complex issues concerning indispensable third parties. Generally, the ICJ, like most judicial bodies, is hesitant to decide the merits of a case that will compromise the rights and obligations of a state whose interests are not represented in the proceedings.

In addition, the time consuming decision making process involved is especially dangerous in an environmental case, as the resource in question may be ruined in the years that it takes for the Court to reach a decision.

Other alleged problems facing the Court in environmental litigation include the Court’s lack of the necessary expertise to significantly resolve the issues, and its poor fact-finding capabilities. The Court does have a legitimate concern in “opening the floodgates to participation by every individual and association interested in its proceedings.” However, environmental cases in particular involve many interests affected by the Court’s decisions that are not represented by the states included in the action. Hence, some argue that the ICJ must be more receptive to receiving information available through nongovernmental organizations and public interest groups in order to possess the full information and to “preserve the rational evolution of the law.”

To illustrate the benefits and drawbacks involved in environmental litigation in the ICJ, the next section examines the Court’s first major environmental dispute resolution, a case involving a contract between Hungary and Slovakia concerning the Gabcikovo-Nagymaros dam project.

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168 See Khakee, supra note 81, at 888; Tadros, supra note 16, at 1129.
169 See Simpson, supra note 155, at 344.
170 See id.
171 See Ferrante, supra note 144, at 312.
172 See Tadros, supra note 16, at 1129.
173 See Ferrante, supra note 144, at 312.
175 See id. at 626.
176 Id.
III. ICJ DETERMINATION OF THE DISPUTE CONCERNING THE GABCIKovo-NAGYMAROS PROJECT

A. Background on the Danube River and the Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Project

The Danube River, like all rivers, provides a valuable resource for many competing uses. It is the major source of drinking water in all its bordering countries except Bulgaria. It is also used for irrigation, fishing, tourism, and industry. Its importance in industry is growing as East-West European trade booms. In addition to these uses, the Danube is in many ways, a unique aquatic ecosystem.

In the 1950s, Czechoslovakia and Hungary began developing a large-scale hydropower project to demonstrate the fruits of socialist cooperation. The Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Project ("G-N Project" or "project"), as it was called, was "basically a plan to divert the Danube River from its natural watercourse into a navigable artificial waterway located within the borders of Czechoslovakia." Three dams were to be built. One would be "located at the mouth of the canal, to divert the Danube into the canal"; the second "in the mid region of the canal, to regulate water level and generate hydroelectric power"; and the third "downstream of the canal, to return the water levels to run-of-the-river and to generate additional hydroelectric power."

Czechoslovakia and Hungary signed an agreement in 1977 to go forward with the project. However, political change in Hungary doomed the project, as Hungarian environmental groups, concerned about the

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178 See Linnerooth-Bayer & Murcott, supra note 50, at 524.
179 See id.
180 See id.
181 See id.
182 See id. at 524-25.
183 See id. at 526-27.
184 Paul R. Williams, International Environmental Dispute Resolution: The Dispute Between Slovakia and Hungary Concerning Construction of the Gabcikovo and Nagymaros Dams, 19 COLUM. J. ENVTL. L. 1, 6 (1994) [hereinafter Williams, International Environmental Dispute Resolution].
185 Id.
project’s effects, generated democratic opposition.\textsuperscript{187} Hungary stopped work on its own dam in 1989 and the country’s first freely elected Parliament repudiated the project altogether in 1992.\textsuperscript{188} Political change was ensuing on the other side of the border as well, as Czechoslovakia divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.\textsuperscript{189}

The Slovakian government refused to accept Hungary’s repudiation and went on with the project, diverting the river to feed the Gabcikovo dam reservoir.\textsuperscript{190} As a result of this action, “over a 30 mile stretch of the Danube River, which formed the border between Slovakia and Hungary, is now located in Slovakia.”\textsuperscript{191} The effects of the diversion on the river are severe:

The Danube, which once coursed through a forest, now flows in a concrete canal. The section of the river that once marked the frontier has shriveled into a pathetic creek; water flow, the Hungarians claim, has been reduced by more than 90 percent, the fish harvest in the region has declined by 60 percent and the quality of the downstream water supply available to Hungary’s farmland has been degraded by increasing concentrations of toxins in a decreasing amount of water.\textsuperscript{192}

The Hungarians claimed that Slovakia disregarded their territorial sovereignty, that their constituents’ rights were jeopardized, and that the environmental damage caused by the diversion could not be tolerated.\textsuperscript{193} The Slovaks, on the other hand, argued that the environmental damages could be mitigated by the completion of the G-N Project and other engineering methods,\textsuperscript{194} and that the project was vital to Slovakia’s security and self-sufficiency.\textsuperscript{195} In addition, the costs would be outweighed by the gains in energy production, flood control and enhanced navigability

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Linnerooth-Bayer & Murcott, supra note 50, at 527.
\item See id.
\item See Linnerooth-Bayer & Murcott, supra note 50, at 527.
\item Id.
\item Schapiro, supra note 188.
\item See Linnerooth-Bayer & Murcott, supra note 50, at 527.
\item See id.
\item See Schapiro, supra note 188.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
of the river. Tensions were at their highest as Hungary and Slovakia began a “nerve-racking set of military maneuvers along the border in the fall of 1992.” The European Union intervened and demanded that Hungary and Slovakia consent to ICJ jurisdiction over this matter. Both States agreed to allow the Court to settle the matter due to pressure by the Union. Without the persuasion of the Union, it is quite doubtful that Hungary and Slovakia would have agreed to consent to ICJ jurisdiction.

The near-armed conflict over this matter demonstrates the length to which Hungary and Slovakia would go to defend their sovereignty. Thus, this case reinforces the point raised above that a state’s fear of diminished sovereignty will deter it from consenting to the binding jurisdiction of the ICJ.

B. The ICJ and the Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Project

When the dispute between Slovakia and Hungary came before the ICJ, the Slovaks maintained the stance that Hungary had breached the 1977 agreement and that Slovakia was justified in going through with its provisional solution, diverting the river. Hungary’s legal argument focused on the legality of Slovakia’s provisional solution, not on the question of breach of contract. Specifically, Hungary argued that Slovakia breached several treaties. Furthermore, Hungary contended that Slovakia violated Hungary’s sovereignty and territorial integrity under customary international law.

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196 See Linnerooth-Bayer & Murcott, supra note 50, at 527.
197 Schapiro, supra note 188.
198 See id.
199 See id. (explaining that unwillingness to consent would render the state ineligible to join the European Community and NATO).
200 See id.
201 See supra notes 71-72, 87, 107 and accompanying text.
202 See Williams, International Environmental Dispute Resolution, supra note 184, at 20.
203 See id.
205 See Williams, International Environmental Dispute Resolution, supra note 184, at 20-21.
On September 25, 1997, the ICJ delivered its ruling. The Court found that “Hungary had not been entitled to suspend and subsequently abandon in 1989 its part of the works in the dam project laid down in the treaty.” However, the Court also found that although “Czechoslovakia had been entitled to proceed in November 1991 to [prepare its plan to divert the river] as an alternative provisional solution,” it was not “entitled to put [the provisional solution] into operation from October 1992.” Furthermore, the ICJ also decided that unless the parties agreed otherwise, Hungary was required to compensate Slovakia for the damages sustained by Czechoslovakia and Slovakia due to the suspension and abandonment of the project; and Slovakia was required to compensate Hungary for damages sustained due to Slovakia’s “provisional solution.”

The Court ordered Hungary and Slovakia to negotiate in good faith and take all measures to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the treaty. New norms and standards, developed over the two decades after the agreement, must be taken into account. Thus, the States must look afresh at the effects on the environment and devise a solution that will be amicable to Hungary, Slovakia, as well as the environment.

The Court’s ruling essentially places the duty back on Hungary and Slovakia to negotiate a settlement, a process that has failed once before. These negotiations differ quite a bit from the previous attempt, for the Court’s ruling cleared up many issues of disagreement between the parties and made certain legal determinations binding.

However, this does not mean that Hungary and Slovakia will easily reach an agreement. In fact, indications are that the parties remain “far apart” after three rounds of talks. In any case, a settlement to this

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206 See Kelly, supra note 177.
208 Modern Environmental Law Applicable to 1977 Treaty, supra note 207.
209 See Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hung. v. Slovk.), supra note 204.
211 See id.
212 See id.
213 See Linnerooth-Bayer & Murcott, supra note 50, at 527; Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hung. v. Slovk.), supra note 204.
214 See Modern Environmental Law Applicable to 1977 Treaty, supra note 207.
215 See Another Round of Talks on Gabčíkovo Fails, CZECH NEWS AGENCY, Mar. 10, 1999, available in 1999 WL 5472945 (relating that Slovakia and Hungary have completely different interpretations of the Court’s ruling).
dispute does not appear to be in the near future.\textsuperscript{216} This fact exemplifies the criticism of the time consuming nature of the Court: a significant chance exists that substantial damage will occur before the dispute is resolved.\textsuperscript{217}

Although the problems alluded to above persist, many encouraging signs have emerged from this case. The Court demonstrated its resourcefulness, namely by sifting through court filings exceeding 500 volumes\textsuperscript{218} and executing its first "site visit" ever.\textsuperscript{219} The Court gave weight to the ILC's development of international waterway law by recognizing some of the Commission's draft articles on state responsibility.\textsuperscript{220}

The Court potentially made itself a more attractive solution for disputing states by accepting the Court's special role in Hungary and Slovakia's agreement.\textsuperscript{221} The Court continued its development of its role as a "partner in preventive diplomacy" as well as its more well-known role of a judicial "last resort."\textsuperscript{222} In other words, the Court resolved the legal aspects of the dispute, yet allowed Hungary and Slovakia the space to negotiate and therefore retain some of the sovereignty states so dearly crave.\textsuperscript{223}

IV. CONCLUSION

One of the many important lessons to take from the Gabcikovo-Nagymaros case is that the role of negotiation is still the principal system used to solve international disputes. States rigorously assert their sovereignty. While forums for third party resolution such as arbitration and adjudication are developing and growing in popularity, states remain reluctant to use these tools because they involve the sacrifice of a great deal of state autonomy.

\textsuperscript{216} See id.
\textsuperscript{217} See Williams, International Legal Principles, supra note 167, at 457.
\textsuperscript{218} See UN: Budget, Staff Cuts Put Strain on Int'l Court of Justice, Court President Tells General Assembly, M2 PRESSWIRE, Oct. 28, 1997, available in 1997 WL 15141216 (explaining that sifting through the volumes "placed a considerable burden on the Court's tiny translation services").
\textsuperscript{219} See id.
\textsuperscript{220} See id.
\textsuperscript{221} See id.
\textsuperscript{222} Id.
\textsuperscript{223} See id.
International laws, such as those regarding waterways, reinforce the predominance of negotiation because they are "soft," or in other words, they are general in such a way that encourages settlement between the parties involved. Strict, or "hard," law would frustrate negotiation as the law would be clearly defined.

In the international setting, a mutually beneficial decision between two sovereign states is much more desirable than hard rules that leave one state sulking. The goal is to foster peace between nations as well as solving the dispute itself. States that are unhappy with the outcome of hard rules may more be tempted to resist compliance, and the strife would continue.

Negotiations will break down at times. They are far from the "answer." However, the International Court of Justice demonstrated its flexibility in the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros case by acting essentially as a tool of negotiation. The Court in reality solved pressing legal disagreements, but left the "decision" itself to be worked out by Slovakia and Hungary. It remains to be seen whether this case will be settled amicably and in time to avoid permanent damage to the fragile ecosystem and the overall environment of the Danube region.

Until states relax their claims to sovereignty in order to attain some specific international goal, such as universal rules governing international waterways, negotiation will dominate international dispute resolutions. The ICJ, recognizing a chance to make a difference, did what it could to promote this process.