INTRODUCTION AND AIM

The purpose of this paper is to analyse how the sanctioned discourse (i.e. the prevailing dominant opinion and views, which have been legitimised by the discursive and political elite) in a society influences and determines water policy. In particular, specific emphasis is put on how domestic discourses affect foreign policy decision-making on water. In addition, these ideas are also useful in explaining why seemingly good and rational advice from outsiders (meaning international water advisors) are sometimes unexpectedly turned down.

An often analysed case in foreign policy decision-making in the area of water is the Jordan River Basin. However, the lion share of the studies deals with the international level, treating every state/nation as an unproblematic singular unit. It is argued that this approach is a gross simplification. In order to understand why nations choose the policies they pursue in the international arena one need to thoroughly study the domestic political context since the policies pursued internationally are likely to be a reflection of the domestic discourse. Thus, the need for governments to be in line with their respective domestic discourse in their pursuit of international policies is key to understanding foreign policy. In the words of Stein (1988, p. 230) "...analysis that ignore the context in which negotiations take place, …the impact of cultural, social, institutional, political and psychological factors or processes of communication and choice, are inadequate as explanations of international negotiations." In the water negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel and Jordan an understanding of the role of the respective sanctioned discourses and what constitutes them is indispensable.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the 70s the French social scientist Michel Foucault usefully distinguished between coercive power (which usually rests with the state through the military forces) and ‘discursive’ power. While the former refers to the use of force the latter is a result of the interaction of interests which form a consensus on an issue. Discourse is thought to be covering all forms of spoken interaction - formal and informal - as well as written texts of all kinds. The language is seen as active and thus carries with it political implications and meanings (Potter and Wetherell, 1994). Thus the language help to construct versions of the social world.

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1 Sanctioned discourse is a term coined by Charles Tripp (1997) and later developed by Tony Allan.
The discourse becomes accepted or 'sanctioned' within a society. It is argued that the discourse sets limits within which policies have to be pursued, i.e. it indicates what avenues may be politically feasible (Allan, 2001a). It represents what may be said, who may say it and also how it shall be interpreted. Turton has usefully described sanctioned discourse (when talking about water) as something that is best understood as a form of "hydropolitical ideology". This is a particularly useful term as it is associated with and draws from other ideologies in society such as nationalism (Turton, 2001). It is helpful in explaining why people that are confronted with same scenarios or events nevertheless describe their experience in quite different ways. The rationale for explaining events in one way or another are often a result of the surrounding social context and the particular discourse that has been sanctioned. In a related line of thinking the sociologist Bourdieu (1986) argues that the dominant knowledge or view in a society is dominant not because it represents a "higher level" of knowledge but because it is formulated from a social position that enjoys a strong power position in the social hierarchy. This position is depending on both economic, social and cultural capital.

The concept of sanctioned discourse also seems to be related to Kuhn's (1962) description of a scientific paradigm in which certain methods and ways of viewing the world have become institutionalised and thus effectively work as "boundaries" for what is feasible. While it is extremely hard (if not impossible) to put forth ideas that run contrary to the sanctioned discourse in a given society it is similarly hard to try to challenge and indeed change the ruling scientific paradigm.

In the creation of the sanctioned discourse various "discursive actors" are active in the arena with special interests or stakes. However, the outcome of this "discursive battle" is bound to be determined by interests and power positions as elaborated by Bourdieu above. While politicians, both in democratic and non-democratic regimes, are in a position to influence the discourse they are not able to exercise full control over it. The discursive line of thinking is useful in explaining why they sometimes choose not to carry out water policies which would seem to be the most rational. Allan (2001a) argues that the role of politicians is mainly to legitimise "that which is determined by the discourse". While that is true one may add, arguing along the lines of Bourdieu, that the politicians have a stake in the discursive battle as they possess certain economic, social and cultural capital. A useful distinction when analysing how discourse affect policy is the one made by Hajer (1995) who argues that actors in a given area (such as the water sectors) create coalitions that subscribe to the same narratives. He calls these 'discourse coalitions'. These coalitions can consist of government officials, water professionals, journalists etc.

Thus it is of interest to analyse the domestic (and international) actors and domestic and international structures of concern for water that are active and have the economic, social and cultural capital to influence the internal discourse within states and thereby setting the stage for its foreign policy. Jönsson (1990) argues that it is helpful to locate different individual cognitive orientations within their ideational system of national cultures which are constituted in the discursive domain. The actors obviously reach for support from the structures in their creation of narratives or story lines. Hence the structures functions as an enabling (or de-

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2 Domestic structures are presumed to be, for example, socio-economic and security situation, national attributes, national ideology as well as strong interests groups (of which the farming community is especially relevant with regards to water). The international structures are presumed to be, for example, the international system (dealing, in essence, with power relationships), international water law, world opinion, influence from donors etc.
enabling) tool for the actor who simultaneously, in the "discursive process", reform and re-create the structures in what can be described as a mutually constituting process.

For a deeper understanding of why a certain discourses become sanctioned it is useful to include aspects of risk theory. Some issues, related to water, might be termed risks although from a scientific perspective they would not be characterised as such. This is so because it fits the sanctioned discourse. Thus actors use the notion of risk as a tool for sanctioning their respective story line. Accordingly, risk is something socially constructed by those actors that possess the discursive power (Jägerskog, forthcoming).

SANCTIONED DISCOURSE AMONG THE PARTIES IN THE JORDAN RIVER BASIN

Turton (2001) argues that due to the strategic importance of access to, and control over, freshwater in a river basin with limited supply states are likely to develop a hydraulic mission which feeds in to a hydropolitical ideology. In this section the various features sanctioned discourse/hydropolitical ideology among the parties in the Jordan river basin are outlined.

It is argued by Feitelson (2002) that the discourse in Israel was largely determined by ideology from the 40s up until the 70s, which implies a strong emphasis on water allocation to agriculture since it represents a central feature in Zionism. Even though Feitelson argues that there has been a shift in the discourse towards more economic reasoning he maintains that the ideological preferences for farming is still reflected in a disproportionate political power that the agricultural sector enjoys in Israel. Arguing along the lines of Bourdieu (1986) the agricultural sector possess the cultural capital needed to have that political power. This is personalised by the former Israeli Water Commissioner, Meir Ben-Meir, who now acts as an advisor to the Israeli Prime Minister Sharon on water issues, and who argues that the Israeli emphasis on agriculture is here to stay both for cultural/ideological as well as strategic reasons (Ben-Meir, 2001 and Rinat, 2001). The strategic argument connects very much to the perception that giving up farming in the remote areas of Israel would constitute a strategic risk. However, one may argue that the policy of using agricultural settlements as a tool in the strategic defence of the state has proven counter-productive. This was exemplified in the war 1973 when many Israeli soldiers were busy evacuating agricultural settlers in the Golan Heights rather than fighting the Syrians. Hence, the policy of keeping agricultural settlements in strategic areas of the State seems to be based on a misguided perception of the strategic importance of them and is perhaps better explained by other political reasons. Indeed, it suits the argument of the farming community which is interested in keeping its allocations at a high level. Hence Israeli water policy can be seen as driven by a farming/military discourse coalition to borrow the term of Hajer (1995). Although this perspective is not excluding co-operation on water issues in the region Israel's main interest in the negotiations is to maintain as high allocations as possible. Consequently, the room for compromise solutions are limited. Furthermore, the idea of importing virtual water, which is the water embedded in water intensive foodstuff, is neglected. While the farming community and the strategic establishment seems to make up a discourse coalition it is also possible to trace the root of their arguments in the domestic structures of the State. A structure of main importance is the ideological dimension - Zionism - in which a basic ideal is to settle the land and to make the

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desert bloom. Perhaps needless to say, this discourse coalition are interested in maintaining a fairly high water consumption in general and in particular for agriculture.

However, today it is possible to find challenges to the sanctioned discourse in Israel. It can be described as a "discursive battle". In that sense there is a differentiation between various experts and water professionals in Israel (as well as in Palestine). On the Israeli-Palestinian water issue there is also, besides the military/farming coalition, a strong group of Israelis (and also Palestinians) arguing for extended joint management of the shared aquifers (Haddad, Feitelson, Aslosoroff and Nassereddin, 1999). This group emphasise the risk aspect when they argue that joint management is the only way to counter the risk of non-reversible decline in the water quality of the shared aquifers. Arguing along a similar line is the current Water Commissioner of Israel, Shimon Tal (Tal, 2001 and Rinat, 2001) who also argues for cuts in allocation to agriculture as a mean to countering the water crisis.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, are stuck in the prevailing discourse that the starting point of any negotiations ought to be water rights for the Palestinians (Jägerskog, 2002 and Haddad, 1997). Haddad points to the fact that the Palestinians have for long been denied their self rule and right to develop and manage their natural resources. The history of conflict, in which the Palestinians have been subject to inequality and repression, and the strong history of farming among the Palestinians is an integral part of the domestic structure in Palestine. Hence the idea that water rights ought to be the starting point in any negotiations is deeply rooted in the history of the conflict. This very strong paradigm effectively set the boundaries for what is feasible. Needless to say there are various discursive actors reinforcing this view thus bolstering the sanctioned discourse.

Inevitably, a negotiation in which one discuss water rights as a main principle must be based on figures of current allocation and use. Today the difference in allocations between Israel and the Palestinian areas is considerable. Thus the water rights that the Palestinians may obtain in a negotiation run the risk of being far to limited. However, a shift on the part of the Palestinians towards the principle of equitable utilisation is likely to render a better outcome (Allan, 2001b). But this is definitely not part of the dominant Palestinian water discourse and consequently not on the table in spite of international advisors pushing for it. It may well be so that the power of the sanctioned discourse indeed prevents the Palestinians from obtaining the best agreement possible. Another dominant feature in the Palestinian discourse is that it is almost exclusively because of Israel that the Palestinians have water problems (Trottier, 1999). This rhetoric is found among both academics, water professionals, media as well as government officials. This is, of course, also a result of having been deprived of rights and self rule by Israel. Nevertheless, it is not a productive stand in a negotiation situation. Nor is it helpful in the work to improve Palestinian water management.

In Jordan a strong argument has been that the water scarcity in the country is man made. It is estimated that the Hashemite Kingdom absorbed around 450.000 Palestinians after 1948. Perhaps needless to say, irrigation was a main feature in accommodating them thus bringing pressure on Jordan's limited water resources (Haddadin, 2000). Along this line of thinking it is argued that Israel is partly responsible for Jordan's water shortage. However, Jordan and Israel has always maintained diplomatic contacts on water issues which has led to a tacit understanding between the parties (Haddadin, 2001). It is argued that the peace agreement from 1994, in which water was a central part, only institutionalised the water regime that was

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4 An elaborate discussion on the various competing Israeli discourses can be found in Feitelson (2001).
5 This is a concept introduced in the transboundary water problematique by Tony Allan (2001b)
already tacitly working (Jägerskog, 2002). Co-operation with Jordan on water was seen by both Israelis and Jordanians as something good since Israel had long wanted a peace with Jordan while Jordan also had wanted peace with Israel. The dominant view among the discursive elite in Jordan was that peace would be beneficial as it would bring about US economic and military aid (Ryan, 1998). As in Israel and the Palestinian areas the virtual water proponents are not strong in Jordan. This is, however, to be expected as Jordan as well the other entities have a strong tradition of farming even though the agriculture today contribute a fairly small part (3-5%) of the GDP.

CONCLUSIONS

Any analysis of foreign policy decision-making with regards to water (and other issues as well) needs to include features of domestic discourse in order to be inclusive. It is argued that the domestic structures to a large extent set the "boundaries" within which policy decisions are taken. Therefore, it is imperative to analyse the factors that are deemed to affect the water discourse in various countries. In Israel, it is found that there exists a form of farming-military coalition which argue that continued high allocations to agriculture are important for both cultural and strategic reasons. In Palestine, the dominant discourse tends blame many of its water problems on Israel (which to some degree seems reasonable) but subsequently fails to address their own management problems in a sound way. Obviously, the Palestine Water Authority (PWA) is content with this line of thinking as it eases the pressure being brought upon them.

In sum, it is found that the idea of looking at discourse, and indeed identify the 'sanctioned discourse', is crucial to understanding water policy decision-making (as well as decision-making in other sectors as well). Failing to acknowledge the explanatory power of this line of thinking run the risk of reaching simplified conclusions, such as - "the policy-makers do not understand water issues" - instead of acknowledging that the power of the discourse perhaps gave them little choice.

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