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Water Scarcity in Pakistan: Hydro-Politics in Indus Basin

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ABSTRACT

South Asia is rich in natural resources and active manpower. Nevertheless, the abrupt and discriminatory boundaries, power imbalances, and unequal water distribution has created water insecurity in the region. This research looks into the topic of water scarcity in Pakistan specifically in the context of hydropolitics in Indus Basin. The complex interplay of power politics over water between Pakistan and India (especially in context to Indus water treaty), as well as its eventual influence on the region, has been given significant attention. Kashmir and the role of other key players have also been thoroughly examined. The findings revealed that water is no longer a political issue, but rather a security concern that might jeopardize state sovereignty and the lives of its citizens. The hydro hegemony of India and the nuclear status of both the states, require the governments to cooperate rather than incite conflict and war over the subject of water.

Introduction

The dynamics of security have evolved in the 21st century, and with this shift, non-traditional security issues have gained significant importance just like traditional security issues. Among various non-traditional challenges, water scarcity is the most fundamental and serious issue. Water scarcity refers to the global degradation of water supplies due to a wide range of factors. The major variables in this scenario are rapidly mushrooming population and urbanization, mishandling of water supplies, global warming, and climate change. Water insecurity is produced by a variety of variables, with water depletion being one of the most significant. Currently, the world is confronting water depletion crises. Water scarcity has major effects not only on human health but also on regional stability and security (Padowski & Jawitz, 2009).

Owing to the growing water scarcity, the prevalent water war paradigm many predicted that the 21st century's battles would be waged for water supplies. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the former UN Secretary-General, contended in 1991 that the "next war will be fought over water, not politics." Conversely, Ismail Serageldin, the Global Water Partnership's chairperson, stated, "If wars of this century were fought over oil, the wars of the next century will be fought over water—unless we change our approach to managing this precious and vital resource." Ban Ki-Moon, the ex-UN Secretary-General, has voiced his fears over the growing water shortage issue. In a January 2008 speech to the World Economic Forum, he stated, "A shortage of water resources could spell increased conflicts in the future. Population growth will make the problem worse, so will climate change. As the global economy grows so will its thirst. Many more conflicts lie just over the horizon". On the other hand, advocates of the water cooperation argument think that sharing water supplies brings collaboration among states. Based on the evidence, Aaron Wolf of Oregon University claims that the link between war and water shortage is shaky (Boesen & Ravnborg, 2004). However, the paradigm of water wars, which emphasizes conflict and competition, has overridden this notion.

Water shortage has been experienced to varying degrees around the world. The water levels are declining worldwide, and there are numerous factors and catalysts for this. According to many, the condition in South Asia, in particular, is extremely grave and catastrophic in regards to water resource scarcity and mismanagement. The situation of this region is intricate, with numerous inter-wined and interlaced ideological, regional, political, and environmental factors, making it hard to approach the challenge of managing water shortage, or more widely the dilemma of water insecurity, as a functional problem on which inter-and intrastate collaboration is required. Many of these countries lack a healthy political connection with one another, thus they are wary of having openness in regards to water supply and depletion. This hesitancy leads to mutual misunderstanding and mistrust, putting the Transboundary River sharing agreements under stress (Faheem & Khan, 2018).

Among all the countries in the region, the arch-rivals India Pakistan are believed to be most prone to the conflicts associated with water security (Faheem & Khan, 2018). The term "water security" is a bit of a misnomer. It considers availability and accessibility to water, as well as the preservation and protection of water supplies. A variety of criteria can be used to determine a country's water security. The level of water shortage in a state can be assessed by using Falkenmark's Indicators or the Water Stress Index according to which "dividing the volume of available water resources by its population." (Falkenmark, Lundqvist, & Widstrand, 1989). As per this index, Pakistan has reached the point of water shortage, with per capita water availability of 1,066 m3 (cubic meter)/person, according to the Economic Survey of Pakistan (2009-10). A similar situation is reported in an Asian Development Bank report. The World Bank's document also brought up the issue of Pakistan's water scarcity. In a 2005 report, the WB stated: "Pakistan is already one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, a situation which is going to degrade into outright

water scarcity." (Briscoe & Qamar, 2008). This data suggest that Pakistan may face major issues as a result of its rapidly decreasing water supplies. Pakistan is a predominantly agrarian state with a significant agricultural economy. Agriculture contributes to about 21% of Pakistan's GDP. Agriculture employs 45% and agriculture is wholly or partly tied to the lives of 65% of the population. Thus, a growing water shortage could have a severe influence on Pakistan's agricultural economy. With every passing year, the gap between water availability and demand is widening. The demand for water in 2025 will be 338 billion m3, while the supply will be 236 billion m3, implying a shortfall of 100 billion m3. It is apparent that Pakistan's water supplies are diminishing, and Pakistan must seriously consider the water crisis (Faheem & Khan, 2018).

Water scarcity, mismanagement, rapid population increase, and climatic changes are all difficulties that India's water supplies suffer, just like Pakistan. The total amount of water available per person in India has declined from 5,000 m^3 in 1950 to 1,800 m^3 in 2005. In 2025, India may surpass the 1,000 m^3 mark (Waslekar, 2005). As a result, India is also classed as a 'water-stressed state by the Falkenmark Indicator. India is also dealing with serious water mismanagement at the state level.

Both the countries signed a water-sharing arrangement in 1960 termed 'Indus Water Treaty (IWT). The Indus Basin System, India is the higher riparian for Pakistan, which is the higher riparian.

Figure -1 (Aljazeera.com, 2011)

The 4 main rivers of the Indus Basin are depicted in the map above. It not only emphasizes the necessity of the IWT in regulating water-sharing in the Indus Basin between Pakistan and India, but it also illustrates Pakistan's vulnerability as a lower riparian in relation to India. The Jhelum, Indus, and Chenab, the 3 western rivers of the basin, travel through Indian-governed territories to finally flow in Pakistan. When confronted with the problem of water scarcity, both neighboring states have their own perspectives and knowledge of the problem. India sees water scarcity as a result of and influenced by climate change, while Pakistan sees the rise in the Indian

hydroelectric plans on the western rivers of the Indus basin, which are assigned to Pakistan in the IWT, as the primary cause of water shortage. Numerous people seem to believe that the IWT will be put under more strain as the issue of water shortages grows, and Islamabad and New Delhi will be confronted with more severe water crises ad thus conflicts in the near future as a result of these contrasting perspectives and the lack of decent political ties between the two states (Faheem & Khan, 2018).

Considering the water-related vulnerability in general, and water shortage in India and Pakistan in particular, the need for exploring the water scarcity and regional stability arises (Imran et al., 2021).

Hydro-politics in Transboundary Rivers

Water is an important component in defining the relationship between riparian states of transboundary river basins and its adherent between them independent of dynamic political scenarios. The survival of a nation, quality of life, and development of nations are in part related to water supply, its allocation, and use. Moreover, it is also claimed that the maintenance of a nation's control over its water resources is vital for its survival (Daclon, 2007). Water politics, usually referred to as hydro politics, is the politics that is influenced by accessibility to water or water resources. According to Arun P. Elhance, hydroponics is "the systematic study of conflict and cooperation between states over water resources that transcend international borders" (Elhance, 1999). The term "hydro-politics" (introduced by (Waterbury, 1979)) is associated with potential violence and conflicts that could be erupted over international waters. Moreover, it is also related to the capacity of international institutions to supervise the shared water capital through a politically sustainable approach, that doesn't cause conflict or tension between water-sharing entities. Water is a complicated issue, and consequently, it is safe to predict that hydro-politics will mirror this complexity. History has witnessed such high-intensity conflicts that have either caused or were magnified by race for shared natural capital, particularly when it was limited. (Wada & Bierkens, 2014). The scholars have predicted that the stability of future international relations is largely dependent on the peaceful settlement of water disputes between riparian starts within transboundary international river basins. The researchers believe that the factors such as the exponential rise world population, and climate change have the potential to aggravate the political situation but global peace would still be dependent on peaceful approaches of world think tanks (Jägerskog, Granit, Risberg, & Yu, 2007). Transboundary cooperation gets difficult to maintain when power and capacity disparities begin to find space between the riparian nations.

Hydro political Interactions: A Battleground for Power

Hydro-political interactions, in a way, are considered as a battleground for power and ideas. Over time, legal scholars have tried to standardize and codify the management of this contented resource. Similarly, legal doctrines are developed for the management of water resources (McCaffrey, Leb, & Denoon, 2019). However,

national claims often erode the legitimacy of these international legal doctrines which are referred to during the legal settlement or to take any riparian action for the management of these transboundary water bodies. In this politically dynamic world, transboundary hydro-politics is shaped largely by the engagements of the states instead of overarching water-sharing principles or standards. International Jurists argue that international cooperation gets complicated due to the contradictory nature of sovereignty-based objectives of states and the management of transboundary water resources (Benvenisti, 2002). The fluid nature of water has posed a challenge to regional and global governance. Political players who are, partially or entirely, reluctant to shun off the sovereignty-based interests might resist or resent the advancement of competing for a water-sharing state. Therefore, the politicians, who are keen to seek support for their resource-related policies, mostly manipulate the nationalist sentiments to address any protest that erupted against their resistive approach (Apter, 2013). This is exactly what is happening in Indus basin.

Hydro politics and Indus water Treaty

The Indo-Pak water ties can be better understood by taking into account Asif Ali Zardari's- former President of Pakistan-comments,

"The water crisis in Pakistan is directly linked to relations with India. Its relations with India could prevent an environmental upheaval in the South Asian region, but failure to do so could fuel the fires of discontent ".(Assef, 2010).

The IWT has served the world well for the past half-century, but it will be sorely tested in the next decades as water scarcity becomes more acute. As the issue of water scarcity, as well as domestic resource mismanagement, has put a burden on transboundary water sharing. The authors argue that decades-old water-sharing agreement between the arch-rivals will have major political, legal, and economic consequences if it is revoked (Bhatti et al., 2019). It is acknowledged, nevertheless, that future water disputes between the two countries would be more frequent due to both nations' lack of institutional skills to integrate and analyze the alteration and unpredictability unfolding in the Indus Basin as a result of climate change (Zawahri & Michel, 2018). Research demonstrates that, while unilateral withdrawal of the pact is not viable, a concerted effort is needed to widen its reach in order to address the region's rising water security issues. Given the current tense nature of Pakistan's diplomatic ties with India, transboundary water sharing would be problematic.

India has quite a time hinted and has given mixed signals regarding its categorical revocation from the obligations of the IWT. Moreover, in 2019, India decided to stop the resumption of a 1989 agreement, independent of the IWT, with Pakistan that confirmed the sharing of hydrological data of the shared rivers between the two states. The agreement was decided to be renewed annually under which the two states were obligated to exchange data of the water levels of the rivers flowing within their territory. India got into 1989 the agreement as a goodwill gesture to Pakistan, but suddenly it felt no interest in the continuation of the pact. In contrast, India has times and again also reassured its public that the Indian government has no

intention to withdraw from the IWT, and therefore will keep notifying Pakistan about "extraordinary discharges and flood flows" as per the treaty. Thus, to comment on the anticipated revocation strategy will be beforehand. However, India's decision to end the 1989 agreement raises questions on India's intentions to meet its legal compulsions under the IWT and Pakistan is skeptical that India would exert its control over Pakistan waters that flow through Jammu & Kashmir. Since most of the headwater of the tributaries are situated within the region directly governed (physically and legally) by the central government, India has, by default, more authority over the water bodies. If India decides to pull back from its commitments under the IWT, it possesses the power to avert all the rivers, destined to flow into Pakistan, away from our land. There is another perspective that India might exercise its discursive power over Pakistan's rivers without violating the IWT. According to Jonathan Zasloff, a journalist, India currently underutilizes its authority over Beas and Sutlej rivers by allowing a certain level of water to flow in Pakistan. Staying within the IWT, India has the legal powers to deflect the water completely away from Pakistan. Coupled with the decision to hold back the hydrological reports from Pakistan, even the complete exertion of India over its river, would severely affect farmers and other communities in Pakistan who are reliant on this water for ages (Kaur, 2019).

Violations of IWT by India

Non-permanent solutions to hydro-conflicts with India (such as Baglihar Dam, Kishenganga Dam, and Wullar), as well as India's flooding of Sindh and Punjab, have pushed Pakistan to reaffirm her obligations as a Bottom Riparian as stipulated in the treaty. As mentioned previously, Pakistan owns the Jhelum, Chenab, and Indus rivers while India gets the eastern rivers Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas. According to IWT, India is not permitted to build any dams that affect the river flow. India, on the other hand, can build a dam on the run of the river. Pakistan's political discord regarding dam construction has been effectively exploited by India. And due to the fast industrialization in Northern India and growing demands for irrigation systems and electricity, India has built several dams on the eastern rivers. Wuller and Bursar are two such projects that are at varying phases of development. Salal, Kishanganga, Baghliar, and Dulhusti, are some of the other projects. The building of the Baghlihar Dam demonstrates India's plan to manage the flows of Western rivers. India is working on numerous projects in Indian occupied Kashmir, and this dam is only the tip of the iceberg (Saqib Riaz, Ishaque, & Baig, 2020).

The following are some of the most important cardinals of India's different projects

Wullar Barrage Issue

Wullar Lake, located on the Jhelum River, is among India's biggest freshwater lakes. In 1985, India began construction on a 439-foot barrage with an additional storage capacity of .3 MAF. Two years later, in 1987, as a result of Pakistan's protests, the project was halted. Islamabad had two key objections: i) India needs Pakistan's

consent to build the dam; ii) India is not allowed to store more than.01 MAF of water on any of the western rivers. (Nasrullah, 1994)

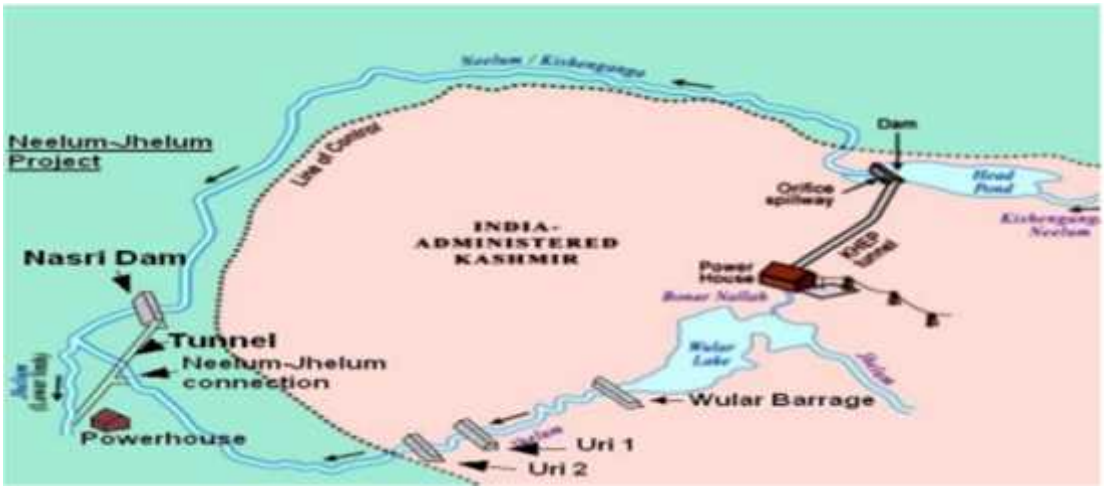

Figure-2: Wular Barrage Project Source: Saqib Riaz, Ishaque, & Baig, 2020

The Salal Hydroelectric Project

It is the Chenab River-related first major dispute that was efficiently resolved with the help of the Indus treaty. On 14th April 1978, the countries signed the" Salal Project Treaty." This dam enabled the flow of water to Pakistan without India having to divert or store it. Nevertheless, Pakistan opposed the installation of 6 anti-sedimentation low-level drain outlets for sediment control. India complied, and the outlets were reduced in height from 40 to 30 feet (Shah & Baloch, 2018).

The Kishenganga Dam

India started a 330 megawatts facility across the Kishenganga River (Neelum River). It comprises a 103m dam and a 27-kilometer long canal to transport water to Wullar Lake, where a power plant will be built. Pakistan expressed its reservations and protested the proposal, citing negative effects on its 969 megawatts "Neelum-Jhelum" project. The Neelum-Jhelum plant was proposed in 1994 but never got off the ground due to a lack of money and political will on the part of Pakistani administrations. Pakistan estimates a 21 percent drop in the flows of the River Neelum as a result of the Indian Kishenganga project. This decline in water use will result in a 9 percent reduced power generation (Saqib Riaz, Ishaque, & Baig, 2020).

Figure 3: Kishenganga Project and Baglihar Project Source: Saqib Riaz, Ishaque, & Baig, 2020

The Baglihar Project

This 450 megawatts plant is being built on the Chenab River in the Doda District. Pakistan has objected to the proposal, claiming that it will lead to a daily loss of at least 8000 cubic feet per second of water during the rabi season. Pakistan believes that once the waters at Dulhasti, Baghliar, and Salal are discharged during the monsoon, the Bajwat region above the Marala Headworks will be flooded. In response to Pakistan's complaints, the WB named Professor Raymond Lafitte as an expert under the Indus Water Treaty. A settlement provision has been applied on this (Saqib Riaz, Ishaque, & Baig, 2020).

Weaponizing Water in Kashmir

The Indus water issue is inextricably related to the disputed region of Kashmir, from where the primary shared water resources flow. In a letter to David Lilienthal in 1951, US Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee expresses this sentiment rather well.

"A settlement of the canal waters question would signify those basic reversals of policy by the governments of both India and Pakistan without which there can be no political rapprochement. Thus, the canal waters question is not only a functional problem but also a political one linked to the Kashmir dispute".

It was believed that settling the water dispute and signing IWT would lay the foundation for overcoming the Kashmir conflict (Ghaznavi, 1968). Before traveling to Pakistan to sign IWT, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru stated in the Indian parliament that he was willing to address any matter, even Kashmir. Pakistani President Ayub Khan shared similar sentiments and expectations. Both the countries have fought three wars over Kashmir so far, yet the conflict remains unresolved and troublesome. Both nations would be unable to build positive ties in the future unless

and until the Kashmir problem is resolved. Nothing will prohibit the nations from forming positive diplomatic ties and tackling the issue of water scarcity together if they strike a deal to resolve the Kashmir conflict (Khan, Khawaja, & Majeed, 2013).

On August 5, 2019, the Indian Parliament revoked Article 370 and 35A of its constitution which served as the last nail in the coffin of Kashmir's freedom struggle as Indian Occupied Kashmir has been denied of its special status that previously granted it sovereignty over its internal affairs. Before this move, the Indian government heavily militarized the region with almost 10,000 troops that suspended the communication networks and handicapped almost all the key representatives of Kashmir. Parliament also approved the "Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act", which geographically divided Jammu & Kashmir and allowed the central Indian government to have legislative authority over these newly created "union territories" (Kaur, 2019)

In terms of water, two prominent stressors had coerced the Modi regime towards taking this huge step. Firstly and most importantly, it is a fact that since the last decade India has been witnessing significant water problems across the country. The pattern of Monsoon rains has now become almost unpredictable which is creating havoc for India's weak infrastructure. The Northern states of India have been a victim of extremes monsoons that are giving birth to floods and devastating the already weak infrastructure. Mostly, due to extreme rainfalls, dams exceed their water storage limits due to which authorities have to release the dammed water towards societal areas and lose their valuable irrigation resource in this way. For instance, recently Kerala has experienced extreme monsoons in consecutive two years leading to crisis due to poor infrastructure and other mismanagements pertaining to land use. Whereas, among Sothern states, Chennai is suffering from water insufficiency due to late monsoons and inefficient water management. Secondly, the other stressors behind this move are perceived to be the bloody historical events of inter-religious conflicts within the subcontinent (Kaur, 2019). Acquisition of state rule by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party for the second time had given a second chance to the party leaders to fulfill the majority party's desire of taking absolute control over Jammu & Kashmir, the only Indian state with a Muslim majority. The same aspiration of transforming all Indian states into Hindu majority areas has many times been demonstrated by Indian citizens as well either through their votes or through their violent anti-Muslim protests. Through such transformation of Jammu & Kashmir, Indians and their leaders know well that this will provide India a legal authority over the waters of the Occupied Kashmir. As explained earlier, two of three rivers allocated to Pakistan for its exclusive use, under the IWT, pass by Jammu & Kashmir. Before the approval of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, Kashmir's state, through which Pakistan's rivers pass by, administered its control over these rivers under the constitution rights attached to the special status of Kashmir. It is widely anticipated that the enhanced direct authority-both physical and legal- recently acquired by the Indian government over the Kashmir region would be soon extended to the region's water, including the rivers that flow into Pakistan (Gupta, 2020).

India purportedly displayed relatively little effort on Indus Basin programs before revoking article 370 (relinquishing Kashmir's Status), instead of using a "zigzag" strategy based on political expediency (Chellaney, 2018). However, 33 projects on the Ravi, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers have been prioritized since 2019. The "Atmanirbhiar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-reliant India)" (IANS, 2020), injected 11,024.47 crores (approximately S$2 billion) in 2020 to allow Jammu and Kashmir to settle overdue electricity payments. The administration aims to transform the area into a net power exporter in the long run, while also using hydroelectric power to create jobs. These initiatives have been recognized as a key "thrust area" for integrating Kashmir with the rest of the country (Sehgal, 2019). Hydropower, according to a high-ranking electric ministry official, is about more than just growth; it's also about the geopolitical border and water management (Dasgupta, & Miglani, 2017).

Pakistan, too, is no stranger to hydropower's geostrategic potential, having incorporated a portion of Kashmir with the Mangla Dam projects in the 1950s and 1960s. Pakistan is currently constructing significant hydropower projects in Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, both of which are part of the former Jammu and Kashmir state. Although, Pakistan in comparison to India, has been challenged with finance issues, prompting a Supreme Court justice to establish a dam fund in which donations are sought. China came in to fund the "Diamer-Bhasha Dam" in 2020, and the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) is funding 4 Additional projects, which New Delhi has expressed "concerns" about (MEA, 2020). In the same way that Islamabad is concerned that India will decapitate its waters or take Kashmir, India is concerned that China, in assistance to Pakistan, will shut off or restrict the flow of the Indus and Brahmaputra Rivers from their sources in Tibet, or continue to construct water systems in Ladakh to expand its reach (Vater, 2021) & (Afzal, et. al. 2020)

IWT from the Lens of Regional Politics

A major aspect of the Indo-Pak, water sharing is Afghanistan's and China's roles, both of which have long been overlooked in the IWT. Nonetheless, in light of current political changes in the region, their importance cannot be overlooked. In transboundary water concerns, South Asian politics plays a highly contentious role. A significant part of regional politics is characterized by these 4 nations' overlapping objectives, under the effect of which countries align to accomplish their national goals by using their own or allies' physical location to frighten opposing riparians.

Admittedly, governments have actually begun to use water as a kind of coercion against enemies. The verbal spats between riparians that erupted in the wake of the disclosures of a dam on the Kabul River and the Lalho hydropower project on the Brahmaputra River provide a concrete example of how IWT signatory nations are employing their cordial ties with other regional powers as a weapon of coercive diplomacy against one another (Qamar et al., 2019). Thus, the geopolitical elements of the Indus basin, which are essential to Pak-India transboundary hydro relations, must be highlighted. Although India is the upper riparian in Indus for Pakistan, China controls the Indus' headwaters; this is an important aspect to consider when

investigating opportunities for collaboration using integrated basin management. Kaushik (2017) highlights that Beijing has been stressing that the Indo–Pakistan ties are interwoven with a complex strategic interaction which is evident from the timing of launching the dam projects along the Brahmaputra. As a result, because India is a lower riparian on the Brahmaputra, China, as an upper riparian, can adopt India's example; nevertheless, the progress of China's activities over the Brahmaputra might have disastrous consequences for India's northeast. Furthermore, as part of the CPEC, China has committed to funding dams in the conflicted region of Gilgit-Baltistan. An illustration of this is that China has authorized finance for the planned DiamerBhasha Dam on the River Indus, which was previously rejected money by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank owing to India's claims for the territory (Neelakantan, 2017). Some also believe that not these dams can also harm Pakistan's economic interests by reducing the flow of silt required for agriculture downstream and the flow of water during the non-monsoon season (Gupta 2017) (Pakistani experts disagree with this notion), but there is a clear consensus that the dams can aggravate the region's geopolitics (Jayaram, 2020). There is not much debate about dams being built on the Indus River and its tributaries in Chinese territory, such as the medium-scale dam near Demchok (Ladakh), which could significantly reduce water flows and affect energy and irrigation needs downstream in both Pakistan and India. It is impossible to see "effective cooperation" in the Indus Basin in the near future because China has not signed any agreements with either Pakistan or India. As a result, any chances for collaboration are conditional on bringing other states like China and Afghanistan on board. The geopolitical implications are not limited to the Indus basin; if India decides to limit the supply or divert the water of the Indus River and its tributaries to Pakistan, it may create a precedent for other countries, including China, to follow suit, perhaps leading to retaliation against India. In fact, only days after India threatened Pakistan that it will fight for its fair share under the IWT, China declared that it would dam a major tributary of the Brahmaputra River, the River Xiabuqu, to build the world's "most costly hydroelectric project." (Jayaram, 2020). In 2016, China used its geopolitical location to restrict a tributary of the Brahmaputra River (Fazil, 2017). Despite Chinese promises that the project will not disrupt natural flows into India, many interpreted it as a message to the Government of India not to coerce Pakistan by restricting its river supplies. Thus, despite the fact that the initiative is unlikely to have a substantial impact on downstream flows, it is certain to create concerns among Indian officials about future Chinese initiatives on the Brahmaputra and its branches (Krishnan, 2016).

Similarly, the Afghan administration's plan to build a dam on the Kabul River with India's funding did not sit well with Pakistani authorities. Pakistan viewed growing Indian engagement in Afghanistan as a hazard to its safety. Kabul is a major tributary of the Indus, contributing 20–28 MAF to the flow of the river. This water flow is critical for meeting the water needs of Pakistan's Khyber–Pakhtunkhwa region. As a result, the exclusion of China and Afghanistan allows Pakistan and India to exert pressure on each other through favorable alliances with these nations, which would otherwise be prohibited owing to IWT constraints. The present South Asian water

diplomacy must address these issues simultaneously by engaging China and Afghanistan in the water-sharing framework (Qamar et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Water is a critical topic in international politics as the flow of Transboundary Rivers affects more than one country. The rapid growth of the world's population, urbanization, industrialization, and shortage of freshwater supplies have put enormous strain on all water bodies. South Asia is a region of the world residing a quarter of the world's population and is home to the world's most violent wars. Today, one of the most critical concerns on state agendas is to carefully manage the water resources.

Pakistan is on the verge of a major water catastrophe, with water scarcity approaching alarming proportions. While the threat of nuclear war looms over South Asia, and water scarcity has emerged as the most hazardous, there is a pressing need to abandon differences and stick to obsolete solutions. It is simply not practical for India and Pakistan to reverse all agreements, but changes to the present IWT are possible as well as necessary for the welfare of both the countries. Thus, there is a dire need for both states to work out a peaceful solution for the issues of water sharing and scarcity.

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