

India's Suspension of AWT - what are the implications & policy options for Pakistan

Introduction

The tense relations between India and Pakistan after Pahalgam attack on 22 April 2025 led to suspension of bilateral relations. India expelled Pakistani diplomats, closed Attadi borders and most significantly held in abeyance of Indus Water Treaty 1960. Pakistan, a agrarian economy, is primarily relying on river water including Chenab, Indus,

Ravi Sirohi. Pakistan declared this suspension as "act of war." These are severe implications of India's move on Pakistan. As it would reduce agricultural output more sharply, along with food risk, energy insecurity and internal and strategic stressors would loom large. Pakistan needs to adopt quick policy measures including water governance, diplomatic strategies and global diplomacy to thwart aggressive move of India and to secure socioeconomic interests.

Background of suspension of JAT 2025 by India

The Pahalgham terrorist attack on 22, April 2025 killed 26 Indian tourists. India quickly blamed Pakistan for the attack without any credible evidence. Although

Pakistan denied allegations, but India immediately cut off diplomatic ties. The more aggressive move announced by New Delhi was the suspension of Indus Water Treaty (1960). The treaty has survived in all past wars and skirmishes. However, ~~the~~ India, this time, using water terrorism to wreck Pakistan's economy.

Reaction of Islamabad

Government of Pakistan has declared this violation of Indus Water Treaty as act of War. The government issued diplomatic notice to India and rejected her unilateral withdrawal, referring to Article XII of IWT, that treaty can not be terminated unilaterally. Moreover Pakistan urged diplomat forums and World Bank to intervene and

restore treaty. Along with that, Pakistan has imposed counter measures and warned of suspension of Shimla Agreement between India and Pakistan.

Implications for Pakistan

Agricultural insecurity and low output

The major implications of suspensions of IWT is the insecurity and low output of agricultural sector. As **80%**

agricultural output and 25% GDP hinge on regulated flow from Indus Basin" as reported by The Economic Times

Authorities fear that it would cause additional shortage of water to Kharif crops that are already facing 21% shortfall. Thus, this

aggressive move by India has crippling effects on agriculture sector of Pakistan.

Hydropower and energy supply vulnerability

Another implication for Pakistan is hydropower and energy supply vulnerability due to suspension of IWT. Tarbela, Neelum and mangla hydropower stations contribute 25-30% electricity generation. Disruption in water supply could severely impact generation, worsening load-shedding and economic performance. Various analysts argue that if crisis continue, Pakistan may face black out or rely on expensive alternatives like LNG (Express news).

Loss of flood and climate data sharing

Another impact is a loss

of flood and climate data sharing. As IWT required India to share real-time flood data especially during monsoon season. Without early warning system may increase risk of flooding and related disasters.

Suspension of IWT has raised the weaponization of water by India

There are grave concerns that India would use to weaponization of water as strategic tool to exert pressure on Pakistan. India is already accelerating construction of hydro power project on western dams. So there are chances that India control of seasonal water release and could release water during monsoon and flood-prone period.

In May, 2025, India decrease the flow of Chenab water

Date: —/—/20
from 35000 cusecs to
3100 cusecs without prior
notice as reported by Dawn news.

This water weaponization could cause
sudden inundation and subsequent decrease
inflow resulting more water shortage.

Legal and diplomatic fallouts

Lastly, IWT has been
one of the few diplomatic agreements
between India and Pakistan that has
survived wars and tensions. The disruption
could dismantle main communication channel.
India's withdrawal undermines international
legal norms. This has made impossible
to resolve disputes through legal channels as
Pakistan did in past including World Bank
interventions. Due to increased economic
hostility of India with west, Pakistan
may face diplomatic push ^{and blockade} for its
enforcement of IWT, by engaging international
community.

Policy options for Pakistan

Date: — / — / 20

Diplomatic options for Pakistan

Internationalization of issue

It is imperative for Pakistan to raise the IWT suspension as regional and global water crisis. Pakistan has already conveyed her stance through nine-member committee at various international platforms.

Pakistan must raise this issue at UN, G20 climate Summits.

Leverage Bilateral and regional dialogue

1 Pakistan should seek support for its strategic ally China. Other regional players including Turkey, Iran and Gulf states may offer diplomatic backing at international forums. OIC and SCO platforms can be used to raise issue.

Initiate South Asian water dialogue

Pakistan should initiate a South Asian Water dialogue over suspension of GWT through regional water diplomacy track. This dialogue could include Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan as these states are part of India and Pakistan's Water and Himalayan resources.

Water management options

Fast track water storage projects

Pakistan should accelerate the construction of Diamer-Bhasha, Dasu and Mohmand Dams. As Pakistan's water storage capacity is 30 days while India's water storage is 170 days. These projects would reduce dependence on rivers flow which is controlled by India.

Revamp water governance systems

Date: —/—/20

In addition to major hydropower projects construction, country should revamp water governance system. It involve investing in smart irrigation, drip irrigation and canal linings to reduce the loss of water. Pakistan should develop National Water Data Bank for monitoring of water flow and enhance inter-provincial coordination over water.

Strategic options for Pakistan

Establish Water Security Division within NSC

After the suspension of Indus Water Treaty, water security is now a national security issue. For this country should establish special water desk under National Security Committee (NSC). This would coordinate

Water management, foreign policy and defence on unified water security front.

Conclusion

Pakistan, right now, is facing plethora of socio-economic and politico-strategic issues, a new major issue has been added to these which is the suspension of Indus water Treaty by India following Pahalgam attack in April, 2025. This suspension has raised grave concerns about water security as 80% water of Pakistan comes from India and this move has significantly blocked water ways. Water insecurity is now considered as major **non-traditional security** threat for country because of its severe implications for agriculture, energy sectors along with economic issues and diplomatic push for country. Government need more hasten and pragmatic policy options to be adopted at social, regional and international