

Q How did the partition of British India and colonial legacy fuel the water-sharing conflicts over the Indus River, and what role has the Indus water treaty played since 1960?

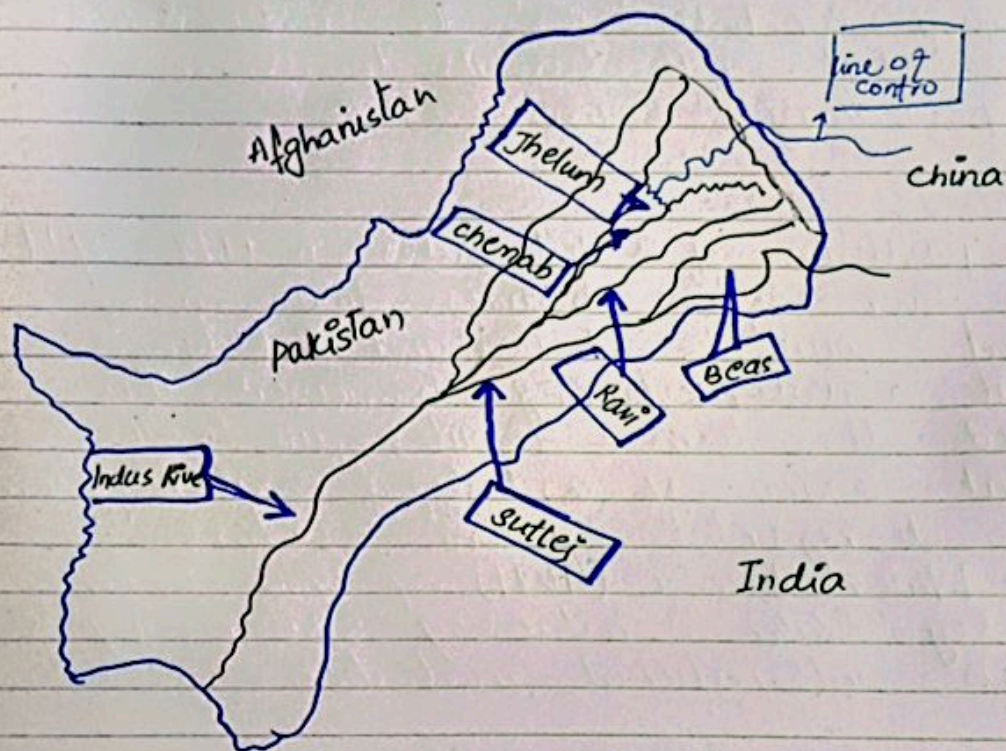
Introduction:

The partition of British India in 1947 split the River system between two newly formed countries - India and Pakistan - without a water-sharing framework. This created long-term disputes due to the colonial legacy of centralized water systems that disregarded future borders. The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960 became a key solution, balancing water rights through international mediation.

The Indus River System:

After British colonialism ended in 1947, India and Pakistan emerged as independent nations. The partition was violent and disorganized. A major early conflict between the two countries was over water resources. In 1948 tensions nearly escalated into war over Indus River system, which flows around 2000 miles through northwestern India and Pakistan. Its western tributaries like Kabul and Khurram Rivers, originate in Afghanistan. Eastern tributaries, Jhelum

chenab, Ravi, Beas, and sutlej come from Tibetan Plateau



most of the basin lies in India and Pakistan; only 13% lies in Afghanistan and Tibet. The river system has historically supported socio-ecological, economic, and cultural life since ancient times, including the Indus civilisation. After partition, both nations faced challenges of state building and modernization. They also inherited complex water governance issues rooted in colonial-era policies.

❖ 1- Legacy of Colonial Infrastructure

The British had built extensive canal system across Punjab, unifying the Indus basin. After partition, this system was split arbitrarily. ~~the~~ Headworks ended up in India, while canals served Pakistan. This disconnect sowed seeds of conflict.

source: Brookings Institution, 2011

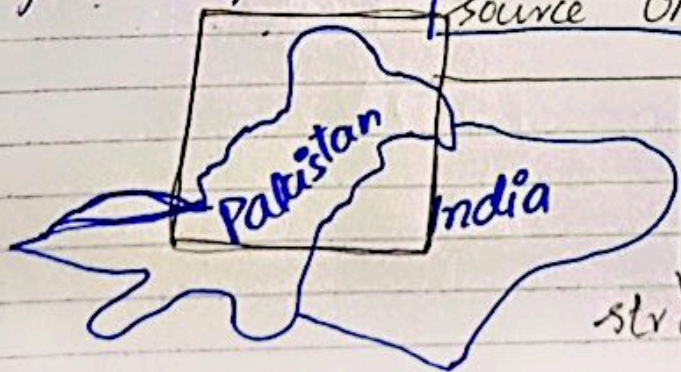
"colonial-era projects disregarded future sovereignty and riparian rights."

2: Impact of Partition on River

Flow:~ After partition, India gained control over the upstream portion of the rivers. On April, 1948, India halted water from Ferozepur headwork to Pakistan, showing how vital river control had become in regional politics.

source UN water Report 2022.

3-



straits Time Graphic

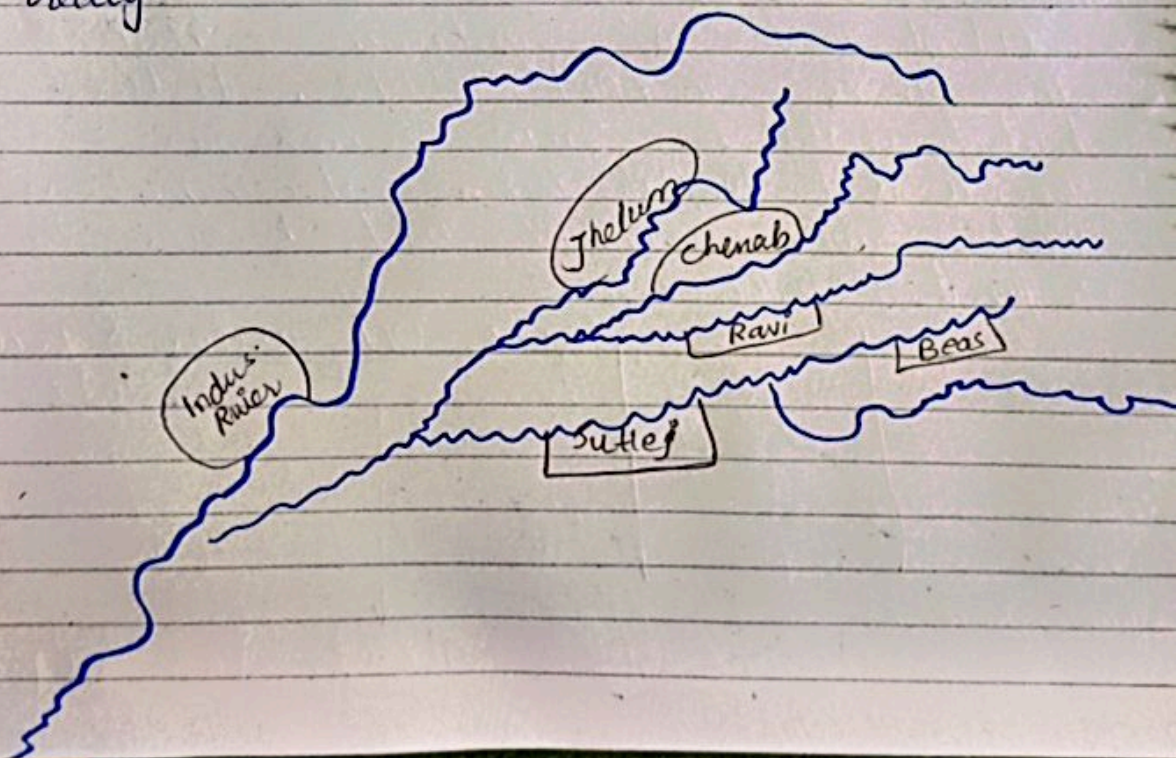
3- Initial Bilateral Failures:

Early negotiations between India and Pakistan failed to resolve disputes due to differing interpretations of water rights and sovereignty. Pakistan feared economic collapse due to potential water cuts.

Source: Indus Waters Treaty (1960)
Historical Analysis.

4- World Bank's Mediation Role:

Realizing the urgency, the World Bank stepped in. It brokered dialogue and proposed a division of rivers to minimize disputes, which culminated in the 1960 Treaty.



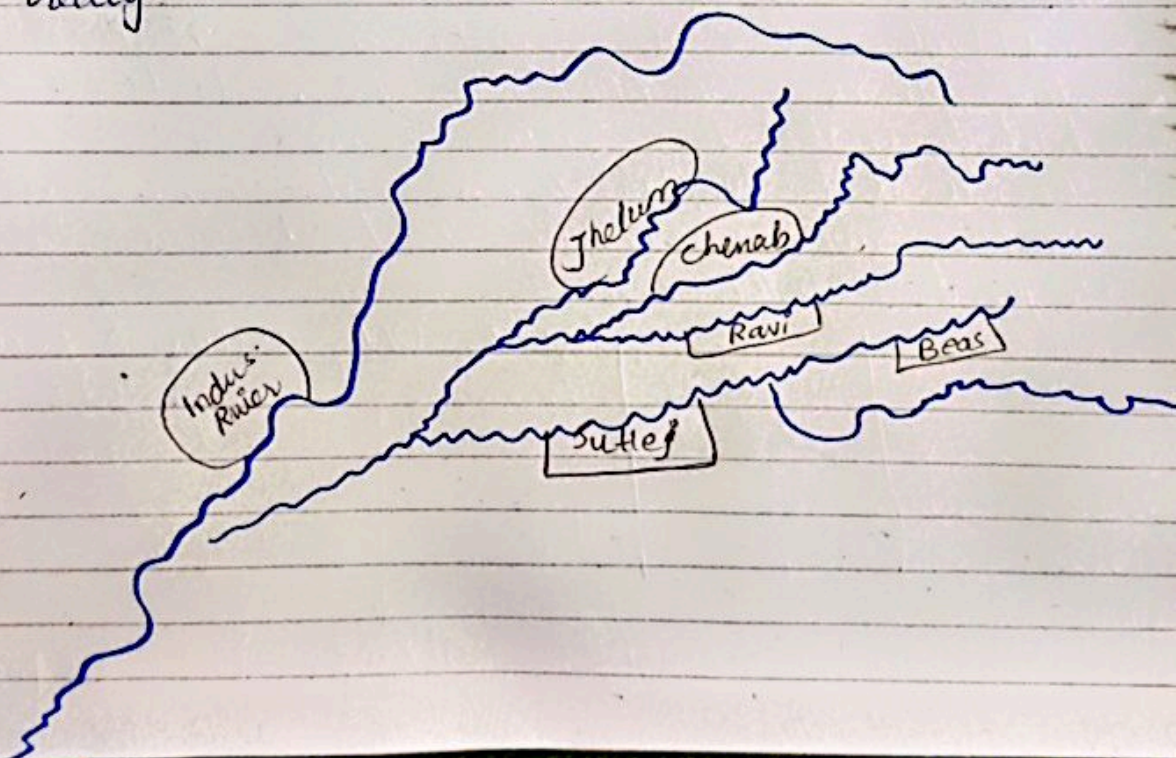
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5- Key Features of Indus Water Treaty

- * {Permanent Indus Commission}
- ↓
- * {Dispute Resolution mechanism}
- ↓
- * {Exchange of Data}
- ↓
- * {Future Cooperation}

(a) Permanent Indus Commission:

The treaty required to set up a permanent Indus commission mandated to meet annually. It acts as a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two countries regarding their use of rivers. It consists of a commissioner from each country.

(b) Dispute Resolution mechanism:

The Indus water treaty provides for a three-tier dispute resolution mechanism. This structure ensures that disputes over the Indus waters are addressed in a graduated manner, with efforts focused first on cooperation and technical expertise before moving to formal arbitration.

ii)

Level 1 :- Questions are handled by permanent Indus commission

Level 2 :- Differences are to be resolved by Neutral Expert (appointed by IWB).

Level 3 :- Disputes are referred to an ad hoc arbitral tribunal called "Court of Arbitration."

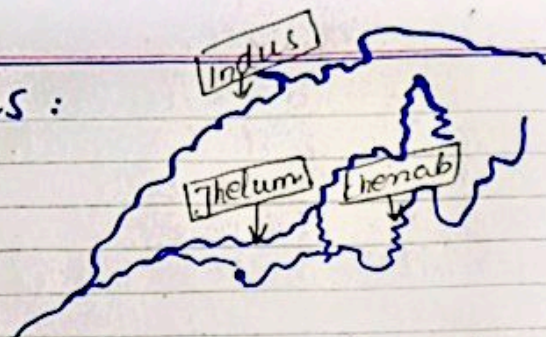
③ **Exchange of Data** Both parties must indulge in the monthly exchange of data on river water usage.

④ **Future cooperation** :- Both countries must cooperate to set up hydrologic observation stations and undertake new drainage work to preserve the rivers.

6- Structure of Indus Waters

Treaty: The treaty allocated the three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) to India and three western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) to Pakistan. It also created a permanent Indus commission to monitor compliance.

Pakistan rivers :



India rivers :



7: Dispute Resolution Mechanism:

The treaty including provisions for neutral expert panels and International arbitration in case of disagreement. This has helped avoid escalation despite several political and military tensions.

Source: International crisis Group, 2021

8- Treaty Resilience During conflict:

Despite wars in 1965, 1971, and Kargil in 1999, the Treaty remained intact. It is often cited as one of the world's most successful transboundary water treaties.

Brookings Institution 2011

9: Contemporary challenges:

India's construction of hydroelectric projects and climate change-induced water variability are putting new strains on the treaty. Glacial melts and monsoon shifts require adaptive updates.

Source: UNDP Climate Risk Assessment, 2023.

10- Conclusion:

The colonial legacy and arbitrary partition lines turned the Indus Basin into a battleground for water politics. However, the IWT, through international mediation and legal structure, has maintained relative peace. Still, modernization and climate pressures call for renewed cooperation to ensure future water security.