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QUESTION

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Enlist the major contours of the Indus Water Treaty 1960 between India and Pakistan. Explain the ramification for both countries if the treaty is held in abeyance.

① INTRODUCTION:

Water, the lifeblood of civilization has historically been both a source of sustenance and conflict. In the context of South Asia, the Indus Water Treaty (1960) stands as a rare diplomatic triumph amidst persistent hostility between India and Pakistan. Brokered by the World Bank, the treaty equitably allocated the waters of the Indus River System and ensured water security for millions, preventing conflict over a critical resource. However, recent geopolitical tensions, unilateral actions and climate induced pressures have raised concerns about the treaty's future. If held in abeyance, the consequences could be catastrophic, not only for bilateral relations but also for regional stability, food security and environmental sustainability.

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② Major Contours of the Indus Water Treaty (1960):

The Indus Water Treaty was signed on September 19, 1960 by India and Pakistan, brokered by the World Bank to resolve water disputes post-partition.

According to World Bank and the United Nations

The Indus Water Treaty remains one of the most successful international water sharing agreements in history

The major contours of the treaty are as follows.

(2.1) Division of Eastern and Western Rivers:

According to the treaty, the eastern rivers were allocated to India while the Western river were allocated to Pakistan

Eastern Rivers	Ravi, Beas, Sutlej
Western Rivers	Indus, Jhelum, Chenab

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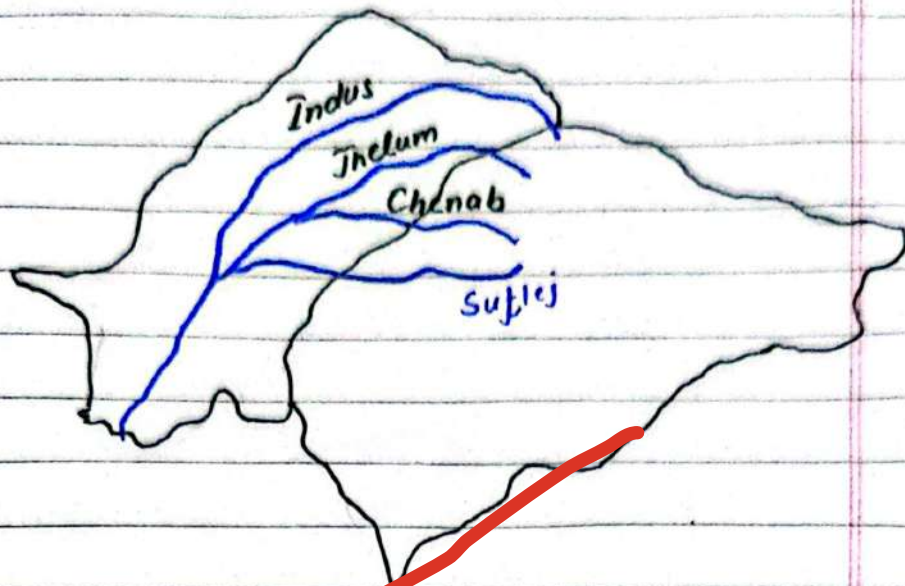


Figure 1 : Western Rivers Allocation
to Pakistan according
to IWT (1960)

(2.2) Limited Rights over Western River given to India :

Article III of the Treaty outlines limited rights of India over the western rivers. India can use the western river for.

- ↳ Non-consumptive purposes :
hydropower, irrigation, navigation
- ↳ Storage limits : 0.4 MAF on Jhelum and 0.75 MAF on Chenab

(2.3) Establishment of Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) :

A Permanent Indus Commission was established with representative from both India and Pakistan to implement the treaty and resolve

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dispute (Article VIII). It is a bilateral mechanism for data sharing and inspections.

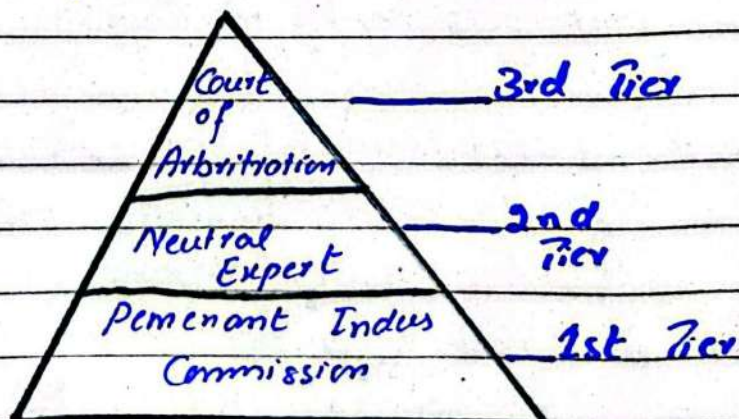
(2.4) Financial Settlement between both Countries:

According to Article V, India agreed to contribute \$62.06 million to help Pakistan build replacement canals and infrastructure to compensate for the loss of Eastern Rivers.

(2.5) Dispute Resolution Mechanism

The treaty outlined a three tiered mechanism to resolve dispute between the countries

- (a) Permanent Indus Commission
- (b) Neutral Expert - for technical dispute
- (c) Court of Arbitration - for serious legal or treaty interpretation issues



③ Ramification For Pakistan if the Treaty is Held in Abeyance:

If the treaty is unilaterally held in abeyance, it would lead to devastating consequence for Pakistan. as follows:

(3.1) Severe Water Scarcity

The Global Water Security Assessment placed Pakistan 5th among the most water insecure countries. The decrease in water flows would exacerbate water insecurity in the country.

(3.2) Agriculture and Economic Collapse:

Over 90% of Pakistan's agriculture relies on the Indus Basin. Loss of water may lead to food lead to food insecurity, rural unemployment and mass migration. Being an agrarian country, inavailability of water would lead to economic loss as irrigation schedules, canal timings and cropping cycles depend on predictable water flows.

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(3.3) Strategic and Security Fallout:

Any India control or diversion could be perceived as "water aggression"

"The next war in South Asia may well be fought over water"

- Kofi Annan

(3.4) Federal Harmony at Risk:

Loss of Water would devastate Punjab and Sindh, Pakistan's primary agricultural zones, it may escalate water disputes under IRSA. Moreover, as seen in CPEC and Reko Dik cases regions like Balochistan and Sindh respond with civil unrest when deprived of resources.

(3.5) Compounding of Climate Impact:

Climate change is already affecting water flows but the addition of political uncertainty worsens the risk. Changes in water flow could disrupt ecological balance leading floods, drought and migration.

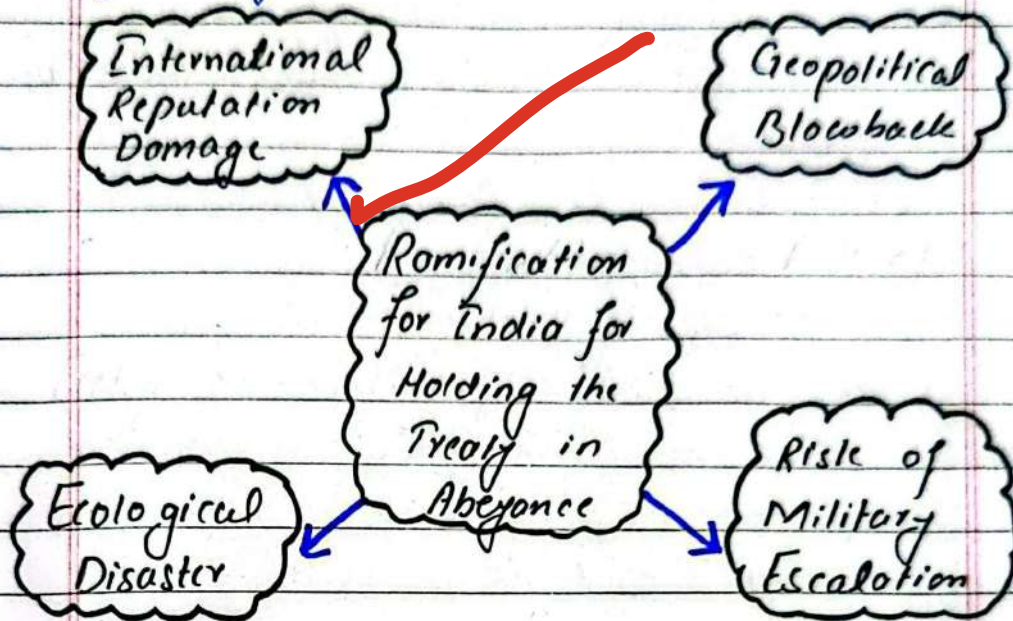
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Ramification For India If they Hold the Treaty in Abeyance:

The unilateral suspension of treaty would have the following ramifications for India.



(4.1) International Reputation

Damage:

India's unilateral withdrawal would violate Article XII which legally binds both countries to treaty terms and specifies that it remains valid until both sides agree to change or end it. Thus, violation of the treaty's terms would damage India's image as a responsible regional power.

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(4.2) Setting up of Dangerous Precedent:

China which controls upper Brahmaputra, may retaliate by restricting water to northeast India. Nepal and Bangladesh may also reconsider river agreements

(4.3) Risk of Military Escalation:

Water is a national security issue for Pakistan; perceived Indian manipulation can provoke escalation

Any threat to Pakistan's water supply is viewed through a security lens

- Brookings Institute

(4.4) Ecological Disaster:

Any manipulation of flow would result in flash floods, drought, migration and collapse of river ecosystem downstream which would exacerbate climate vulnerabilities in India.

(5)

Conclusion:

"If the war of this century were fought over oil, the wars of the next century will be fought over water."

- Ismail Serageldin

In a nutshell, the Indus Water Treaty is not just a water-sharing agreement but a peace treaty in disguise, credited with preventing war even during 1965 and 1971 conflicts. Any attempt to withhold it in abeyance would trigger strategic instability, worsen climate vulnerability and politicise resource management. Therefore, upholding the treaty remains the only sustainable path forward.

good attempt!!!