

HYDROPOLITICS:- The systematic or

scientific study of disputes and cooperation over water resources among state and non-state actors is called Hydropolitics.

Hydropolitics helps us better understand and manage the security underpinnings of the transboundary water management. Hydropolitics highlights the simultaneous codependence of shared and rival interests and a dynamic nature of cooperation and competition among riparian nations overtime.

(a) Why Hydropolitics is important?

Riparian nations might consider shared waters as a national security issues, especially when diminished water supply threatens economic security. When a state power is threatened, then the potential for disputes are highlighted. Thus, hydropolitics is so important.

(2) Types of Water disputes:

(a) Intrastate Disputes:- When conflicts occurs within a single country, often between different states.

E.g.- Water disputes over water

sharing between states like canals disputes arose by Sindh and Punjab. Another dispute over Cauvery river between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

(b) Inl̄erstate Disput̄es:- When conflicts arise between two or more countries over a water sharing mechanism river basin, lake, or groundwater, these disputes are characterized by upper and lower riparian dynamics which affects the water supply and quality of a lower riparian country.

→ The disputes between India and Pakistan over the Indus water treaty, Syria, Turkey, and the Iraq over the Tigris and Euphrates.

(3) WATER DISPUTES IN SOUTH ASIA:-

Water disputes in South Asia is a complex issue followed by the regions due to water scarcity, and the geopolitical dynamics where issues leads to upper riparian and lower riparian dynamics because upper riparian's decisions directly affecting the lower riparian countries and neighbours.

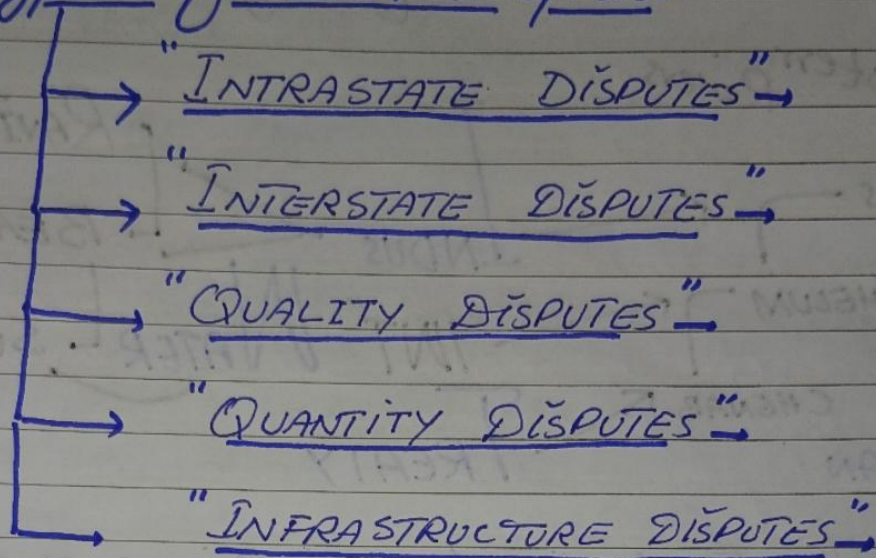
→ Major reason is nothing but lack of trust and cooperation hinders and accelerates these issues.

(a) Indus-Water Treaty.

(b) India vs Bangladesh

(c) China vs Brahmaputra River

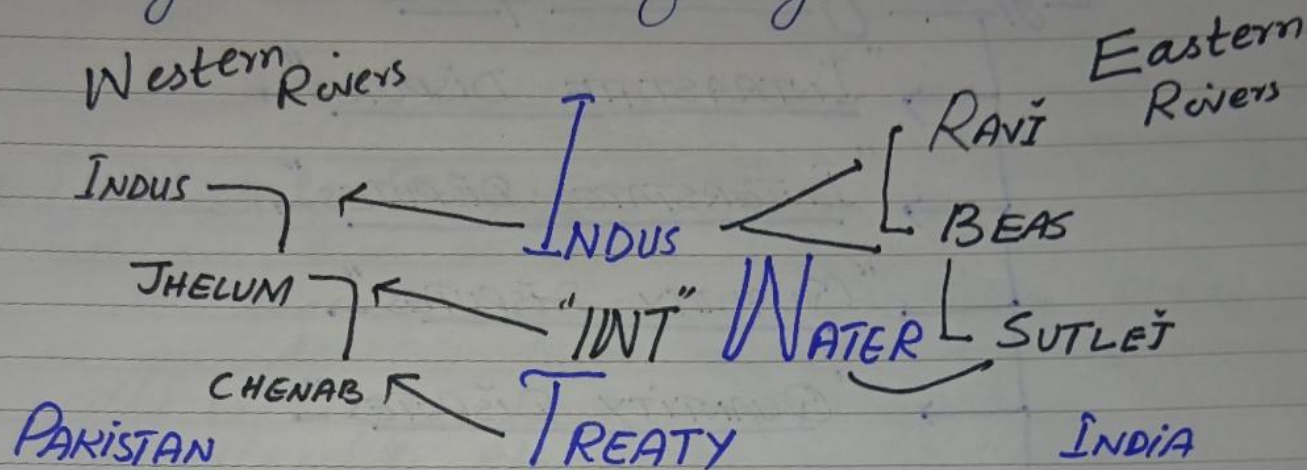
Types of Water Disputes



(a) INDUS WATER TREATY: - Water disputes between India and Pakistan was begun after the partition because irrigation headworks at Madhopur and Ferozepur fell within Indian borders resulting in water disputes. Following the end of Standstill Agreement on April 1st, 1948, India started withholding water entering Pakistan. An interim Dominion Accord on May 4, 1948, obliged India to provide water to Pakistan in exchange of compensation. Pakistan submitted complaint to the United Nations in 1951. The world bank started mediation and negotiation to settle the water dispute.

The Indus water treaty is a landmark water-sharing agreement signed b/w India and Pakistan on September 19th, 1960, in Karachi. The treaty was

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brokered by the world bank after nearly the decades of negotiations.



The treaty involves six rivers of the Indus river system: (Ravi + Indus, Jhelum + Chenab, Beas + Sutlej) into two categories:

1. WESTERN RIVERS: (INDUS + JHELUM + CHENAB) are allocated to Pakistan.
2. EASTERN RIVERS: (RAVI + BEAS + SUTLEJ) are allocated to India.

India has exclusive rights over eastern rivers where Pakistan has exclusive rights over the western rivers, though India is permitted limited use for the purposes such as irrigation, hydropower and navigation.

A permanent Indus Commission PIC was established to manage data exchange, inspection, and conflict resolution. A treaty includes multi-tiered dispute resolution.

mechanism; first through PIC, then a neutral expert, and ultimately court of Arbitration, where WB plays a supportive role.

VIOLATIONS OF INT:-

(1) CONSTRUCTION OF DAMS: The construction of Baglihar Dam began where Pakistan objected that the design parameters of the Baglihar project violated the Indus water treaty. But accusations of Pakistan went rejected by naturalist expert Prof. Raymond Lafitte, appointed by World Bank.

(a) KISHENGANGA HYDROELECTRIC POWER PROJECT:-

In 2007, the construction of Kishenganga hydroelectric power project 330 MW begun but it was halted as Pakistan went to permanent court of Arbitration at the Hague where Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that India could divert water for power generation while ensuring a minimum flow of 9 cumecs downstream to Pakistan.

2007 ————— 2009 ————— 2013 ————— 2016

Pakistan asked the world bank again to appoint a court of Arbitration to review the designs of Kishenganga and another project on Chenab, called Rattle.

(b) Hegemony and Terrorism:-

"Blood and water can't flow together."

It was declared by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 26th, 2016 in the wake of 19- Indian soldiers dying in military attacks on Uri-Military Base in Indian-administered Kashmir. The World Bank set in motion but India and Pakistan refused to withdraw their proposals. After several rounds of talks, WB resolve the disputes.

(c) Suspension of Treaty:- On April 23, 2025, India suspended the Indus Water Treaty after an attack in the Baisaran Valley of Peshawar, Tammur and Kashmir which results in civilian casualties. India alleged that the attack was sponsored by Pakistan and stated that treaty would be held in abeyance until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism.

(i) The Military Response:

"OPERATION SINDOOR"

A few days later around May 7, 2025, India launched operation sindoor, a military operation involving missile and air strikes on terrorist infrastructure and basis in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Pakistan immediately condemned operation Sindoor as a blatant act of war and a violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity and labeling it a false flag operation by India. Pakistan alleged that targeted civilian areas, including mosques, resulting in deaths of civilians but a claim India vehemently denied, asserting it only targeted terror infrastructure.

Pakistan launched Operation Buryan-un-Marsos, involving missile and drone strikes against Indian Military instalments which leads to four days of intense high strikes military conflicts. The immediate and violent reaction by both sides ultimately led to de-escalation, after four days of conflicts, a ceasefire was agreed upon by the help of US President Donald J. Trump on May 10, 2025.

④ CAUSES OF WATER DISPUTES:-

(1) Increasing Population:- Increasing population growing in South Asia has exhausted the available water resource as the growth rate does not match the increase in water resources therefore the needs of the population are not be met adequately, leading to conflict. As the issue resides, South Asian population will be unable to acquire safe water for consumption and adequate water for agriculture.

② Weak treaties:- Ambiguous treaties, which do not anticipate future trends. Weak treaties are bound to generate conflicts over time, as each party of the treaty analyzes their benefits from the treaty and seeks ways of maximizing benefits.

③ Climate Change:- Climate has severe impacts on available resources that involve environmental destruction and rise in temperature, draughts, floods, heat waves are in priorities. Major countries of South Asia rely on the agriculture, therefore water scarcity may cause the heavy losses which India and Pakistan is facing. Pakistan argues that climate change will bring floods, harsh winters, which will reduce river flow as a consequences of diversion of the river by India.

④ Leadership:- Leadership in any country entails the distribution of resources. With great users, even scarce resources are effectively used. When leadership is weak, the available resources are misappropriated or indicates hegemony rival. The dispute between India and Pakistan can be partly blamed for a weak leadership which is hesitant in solving the issue present.

Disputes:-

① India - Bangladesh:- Bangladesh shares

54 rivers with India. Bangladesh is lower riparian include three major rivers, Ganges, the Brahmaputra, and the Meghna, where all these rivers serve as the natural surface water resources in Bangladesh. Major reason for Bangladesh is too much water in monsoon and drought in dry seasons. Sharing of waters of Ferri, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharala, and Dhudhkumar is creating problems between Bangladesh and India.

→ Ganga is shared by India with Nepal, Bangladesh, and China. In 1951, India decided to construct a barrage across the river Ganga in west Bengal. Bangladesh objected but India began construction, later was completed in 1974.

India is planning to build a project to divert water of Ganges and Brahmaputra and proposed project is to resolve problems of drought and flood.

Tipaimukh Dam:- India is constructing massive barrage on the Barak river with a capacity of 1500 MW at Indian state of Assam, which is the violation of International river law because they need to take Bangladesh into confidence. As it may damage the agriculture of Bangla-

desert as it is drying up Rukshera and Sumra rivers. It will also harmful to ecosystem and climate change of Bangladesh.

(3) India - Nepal:- Major problem behind the water issue seems is the political mistrust which has escalating the conflict. Nepal is the upper riparian state of South Asia. The major Mahakali and Karnali fall into Ganga. These rivers contribute 70% of the dry seasons flow and 41% of the annual flows of the Ganges whereas the hydropower generation capacity is some 83000 MW.

Nepal's mistrust has been reinforced by the various unequal treaties, starting from Sharada Dam, Koshi Agreement, Gandak Agreement, Tanakpur Agreement and Mahakali treaty.

→ Mahakali Treaty:- It was signed in February 1996 between India and Nepal, pertains to sharing water of a river, but currently the treaty faces poor crop and implementation techniques. It was introduced by equal partnership. India wants their border Lipu Lekh but Nepal favours the Limpiyadhura.

Recommendations:- Water has played a primary role in the rise of ancient civilizations. The uneasy marriage of policies, and external drivers that govern most shared waters creating conflicts and can only be settled by following recommendations.

1) Effective Policies:- All countries within South Asia should implement policies for the mutual use of rivers and their national interest will not be affected. E.g. When both countries are constructing dams, mutual construction will enable them to pursue their ultimate goal.

2) Dialogue:- Dialogue is the most effective way in which any dispute can be resolved. As aggression or violence will only lead to destruction. It is imperative that any issue is sorted sooner in order to avoid any further conflict. Treaties which are based on dialogues are Indus Water Treaty and Mahakali Treaty in South Asia.

3) Developing new treaties:- Establishing of a new treaty is another way in which conflict may be resolved. After establishing a new treaty, future projections for both countries should be adequately assessed, whereas already existing treaties should be re-negotiated.

CONCLUSIONS:-

India is the hydro-hegemon in various guises in Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. It is often perceived as a bully bothering other nations over territorial and water disputes. Many researcher however argues that India's hydro-hegemony has created consent and stability in the transboundary water interactions in South Asia thus making water wars, unlikely. In my opinion, although India has uneasy water disputes with all South Asian countries. India should stop interfering with the water disputes to avoid any water wars.