

Indus-Water Treaty - An Alarming Issue

Outline

1 Introduction

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1.2 General Statement

1.3 Thesis statement

2 Understanding the Indus Water Treaty

2.1 Historical background and signing in 1960

2.2 Role of World Bank as guarantor

2.3 Division of rivers: Eastern and Western

3 Significance of the Treaty for Pakistan and India:

3.1 Ensuring water security for Pakistan's agrarian economy.

3.2 Providing India with control over eastern rivers

3.3 Diplomatic success despite wars and hostility.

Write only relevant headings
give more points in IWT an
alarming issue

Write thesis statement atleast in
the introduction

Use transitions devices to bring
coherence in your para

Work o your evidences

Everything that is mentioned in
para must be in essay

Upgrade your data as well

4 Why the Treaty has Become an Alarming Issue:

- 4.1 India's construction of dams and hydro projects.
- 4.2 Climate change and declining water flows
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5 India's Strategic use of water as Political Weapon:

- 5.1 Threats to "review or revoke" the treaty.
- 5.2 Water as a tool of coercive diplomacy post-Uri and Pulwama Incidents.
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- 6.2 Energy crisis due to reduced hydropower
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7 Climate Change and Environmental Pressures:

- 7.1 Melting glaciers in Himalayas
- 7.2 Erratic monsoons and floods
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- 8.3 Global water crisis and South Asia's vulnerability.

9 Prospects of solutions:

- 9.1 Confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan.
- 9.2 Revisiting treaty clauses with mutual respect.
- 9.3 Regional cooperation through SAARC and SCO frameworks
- 9.4 Efficient water management and conservation in Pakistan

9.5 International mediation and strengthening dispute-resolution mechanisms.

10 Recommendations:

10.1 Diplomatic engagement instead of confrontation.

10.2 Investment in water storage and dams in Pakistan

10.3 Adoption of modern irrigation and agricultural practices

10.4 Climate adaptation strategies

10.5 Strengthening institutions like Indus River System Authority (IRSA)

11 Conclusion:

11.1 The Indus water Treaty remains a fragile yet vital lifeline

11.2 Its transformation into a point of conflict is alarming.

11.3 Survival of millions depends on responsible handling.

11.4 Instead of being a cause of war, war must be made an instrument of cooperation.

Essay:

Indus-Water Treaty - An alarming issue

Directly integrate your hook into Introduction para

Remember your topic is not about water it's about IWT

"Water is the driving force of all nature"

Leonardo da Vinci

Water is the lifeline of civilizations, economies, and human survival. In South Asia, where agriculture sustains millions and hydropower fuels economies, the distribution of water has been both a blessing and a source of contention. Among the most critical water-sharing arrangements in the world stands the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960, brokered by the World Bank between India and Pakistan. Though hailed as a remarkable achievement of diplomacy at the time, the treaty has become increasingly fragile under the pressure of climate change, population growth, aggressive nationalism, and regional politics. Today, the Indus Water Treaty

is not just a bilateral accord, it is an alarming issue that threatens food security, regional stability, and peace between two nuclear neighbours. The urgency of revisiting its challenges lies in the fact that water scarcity is no longer a distant threat but a pressing reality for both countries.

The Indus Water Treaty was signed on **September 19, 1960**, between Pakistan and India, with the World Bank acting as a guarantor. The treaty came at a time when the two countries had already fought their first war over **Kashmir** in **1947-48** and relations were marked by deep hostility. Yet, despite the political climate, both nations recognized that water was too vital an issue to be left unresolved. Under the treaty, the six rivers of the Indus Basin were divided: the three **eastern rivers** (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej) were allocated to India, while the three **western rivers** (Indus,

Indus, and Chenab) were allocated to Pakistan. India was, however, given limited rights to use western rivers for non-consumptive purposes such as irrigation, hydropower, and storage within certain limits. This division allowed Pakistan, an agrarian country heavily dependent on water, to secure resources for its massive irrigation network, while India gained full control of the eastern rivers. The treaty thus became a **cornerstone of peace** and coexistence, surviving even during the wars of 1965, 1971 and the 1999 Kargil conflict, making it one of the most resilient international agreements.

For Pakistan, the treaty was **not merely about water but about survival**. Almost ninety percent of its **agriculture** depends on irrigation, and the Indus Basin irrigates about **eighty percent** of its cultivated land. Crops such as wheat, rice and cotton, the

backbone of its exports and food security are entirely reliant on this system. For India, while the eastern rivers provided it with full freedom to develop projects, the treaty also removed a potential flashpoint by granting Pakistan guaranteed rights over western rivers. At the international level, the agreement was hailed as one of the most successful water-sharing treaties in history. However, while its endurance has been admirable, the treaty faces unprecedented stress in the twenty-first century, making it an alarming issue.

India's construction of hydroelectric projects on western rivers has caused persistent disputes. Projects like the Baglihar Dam on the Chenab and the Kishanganga Project on the Neelum-Jhelum tributary have raised Pakistan's concerns about water diversion and reduced flows downstream.

Pakistan alleges that India is exceeding its treaty limits by storing water and reducing supply during critical agricultural seasons. This has created a sense of insecurity in Pakistan, where fears of water scarcity are deeply tied to economic and political stability. In addition, climate change has altered rainfall patterns and reduced glacier melt, cutting water supply to the basin. With Pakistan's population projected to exceed 260 million by 2050, the demand for food and water is rising exponentially, while the availability of fresh water is shrinking. This combination of external pressures and internal weaknesses has turned the Indus Water treaty into a ticking time bomb.

The issue has further worsened due to India's strategic use of water as a political weapon. After the Uri attack in 2016 and the

Pulwama attack in 2019, Indian leaders openly threatened to review the treaty. Prime Minister Narendra Modi famously remarked,

"Blood and water cannot flow together" signalling India's willingness to use water as a tool of coercive diplomacy. Such rhetoric highlights how a vital resource has been transformed into an instrument of political leverage, escalating tensions between two nuclear-armed neighbours. The weaponization of water not only destabilizes the fragile peace but also raises the stakes of conflict in South Asia.

For Pakistan, the consequences are existential. Reduced water flows mean widespread crop failures in wheat, rice and cotton production, which directly threatens food security and export revenues. The shortage also hampers hydropower generation, worsening the energy crisis that already undermines

Industrial productivity. According to the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources, Pakistan is at risk of becoming water scarce by 2025 if urgent reforms are not implemented. This scarcity fuels food inflation, unemployment, social unrest, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and instability. Water shortages are not merely environmental challenges for Pakistan, they are national security threats that can destabilize the country internally.

Climate change has further complicated the problem. The treaty was signed in an era when climate change was not part of global discourse. Today, the Himalayan glaciers, the primary source of the Indus rivers, are melting at unprecedented rates due to rising global temperatures. Monsoon rains have become erratic, leading to devastating floods and prolonged droughts. Pakistan's 2022 floods displaced more than 33 million people, demonstrating the destructive

capacity of climate-induced water disasters. At the same time, provinces like Sindh and Balochistan face increasing destruction due to prolonged droughts. The environmental volatility renders the treaty's rigid framework outdated and highlights the need for more adaptive mechanisms.

The international dimension of the Indus Water Treaty also underscores its alarming status. The World Bank, while a guarantor, plays a limited role in resolving disputes, and its arbitration processes are often slow and politically sensitive. The Baglihar and Kishonganga disputes illustrate the limitations of existing mechanisms. Meanwhile, China as an upstream country controlling parts of the Indus tributaries in Tibet, indirectly influences the basin. In the broader context, global think tanks such as the UN Water Development

Report repeatedly warn that South Asia is one of the most water-stressed regions in the world, making cooperation essential. Yet, mistrust and hostility prevent constructive dialogue.

Despite the challenges, the alarming nature of the treaty does not mean its collapse is inevitable. Instead, it provides an opportunity for India and Pakistan to build confidence and revive cooperation. Both countries could agree on updating the treaty in light of new realities such as climate change, population growth and technological advances. Ensuring transparent data sharing, joint monitoring of projects, and dispute resolution mechanisms can strengthen mutual trust. Regional organizations like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) could be used as platforms for water diplomacy. Beyond regional cooperation, Pakistan must

also take responsibility for its own water management. Current irrigation systems waste up to 60% of water due to outdated flood irrigation methods. Investment in large storage projects such as the Diamer-Bhasha Dam, adoption of modern irrigation techniques like drip and sprinkler systems, and strengthening of institutions such as the Indus River System Authority could significantly improve efficiency.

To address the alarming challenges, several recommendations emerge. Diplomatic engagement rather than confrontation must be prioritized, with dialogue under World Bank supervision playing a central role. Pakistan should expedite the construction of reservoirs and dams to enhance storage capacity, thereby reducing dependency on seasonal flows. The adoption of water-efficient agricultural practices and the cultivation of less water-intensive crops can significantly reduce wastage. National

climate adaptation strategies are necessary to mitigate the dual threats of floods and droughts. Institutional capacity, particularly at IRSA and provincial water bodies, must be strengthened to ensure transparent and fair water distribution. At the international level, Pakistan should engage in multilateral platforms to secure mediation and global support for equitable water-sharing arrangements.

In conclusion, the Indus Water Treaty stands as a rare success of diplomacy in a conflict-ridden region, yet its relevance is under severe stress. What was once a guarantee of peace is now an alarming issue threatening the very survival of millions. For Pakistan, the treaty represents the difference between food security and famine, for India, it is an opportunity to demonstrate responsible leadership. The only sustainable path forward lies in transforming water from a weapon of conflict into an instrument

of cooperation. If handled wisely, the Indus Basin can be a source of shared prosperity, if mishandled, it could become the trigger for future wars. The survival and stability of South Asia depend on how responsibly the two neighbours address this alarming issue. As said by Serageldin:

"Water should not be a cause of war, but a catalyst for peace"

(Ismail Serageldin
former V. President of
World Bank)
