

Indian Water Hegemony; Hinge on Pakistan-India Relations

Abstract

Water scarcity in Pakistan is the hall mark. Per-capita water capacity is dwindling day by day. The agriculture faces bad time due to shortage of water. The GDP and GNP have badly affected. The shortfall of electricity is not being controlled as the dams have dried up. The reasons for the water scarcity are that India has started constructing the run-of-the-river dams on the Rivers which have allocated to Pakistan. As per the Indus Water Treaty signed in 1960, Pakistan was allowed to make the exclusive use of the water of Rivers Jhelum, Chenab and Indus, whereas, the water of Eastern Rivers such as Ravi, Sutlej and Beas could be used by India exclusively. It is unfortunate that India started construction on the Rivers of Chenab and Jhelum. Thus Pakistan has lost the share of water which was due to it. The result is drought, famine and less production of crops. It is feared that if the same continues Pakistan may one day will have resort to the import of food despite an agrarian country.

There is no denying a fact that the Pakistan is in the tight grips of water scarcity. There is drought-like situation. It worsens when it is known that this country has an agro-based economy¹. The GDP and GNP suffer a lot and the targets set by the Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan². People face severe shortage for the potable waters also. The dams have dried up and electricity is in shortage. This is how the country is in the limbo of darkness. The industry has shut down and the irrigation system has badly affected due to dried canals³.

This acute shortage of water has its roots in a decades-old dispute between India and Pakistan. The Punjab was partitioned⁴ unpardonably in 1947 and created conflicts between both the countries. Water flew from Indian occupied Kashmir and enjoyed grip over the water. Pakistan had dependence on the water of six rivers which irrigated crops on the heartland of Pakistan id est. Punjab and other provinces.

Lurking in this grave situation which the India could create famines and droughts in Pakistan, Pakistan had to resort to the solution of this grave danger which had a potential to strangle the throat of Pakistan's agro based economy. With the brokerage of the World Bank and under its auspices it entered into a water treaty which is known as Indus Basin Treaty⁵ and signed in Karachi on 19th September, 1960 between the Prime Minister of India JawaharLal Nehru and the President of Pakistan Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan⁶.

The India enjoyed complete independence over waters of three eastern rivers namely, Ravi, Sutlej and Beas. The right of India on the use of these rivers and its tributaries ended on the point where it entered into Pakistan. Likewise,

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Pakistan had full control on the waters of rivers Jhelum, Chenab and Indus and its tributaries⁷.

The dispute came to the surface when India didn't allow Pakistan to use the water of three major rivers allocated to it as per the Indus Water Treaty. Pakistan in order to compensate the loss built the dams on Indus and Jhelum rivers. But the tremendous growth of population estimating at 200 Million resulted into water shortage⁸.

India is not well-wisher of Pakistan. It always tries to find opportunities to give harm to Pakistan in all respects. When the Indus Water Treaty was signed under the auspices of the World Bank, but it didn't comply with the terms and conditions of the treaty in letter and spirit. The treaty had unequivocally made it clear that the signatories shall be bound to share the technical details before any of the countries start a project on the water of six rivers. The attitude of India has severed the diplomatic relations between both the countries⁹.

When the protest was launched by the Pakistani authorities on the issue of stealing the due right of Pakistan on its water, India has denied of doing anything which is in contravention of Indus Water Treaty. It claims that it didn't cut off water flow to Pakistan. But, the experts claim that India has violated the terms and conditions of the Treaty¹⁰. On the river Jhelum, the water over which Pakistan exclusively enjoys the use, India has started constructing the Wullar Barrage. The Size of Lake of Wullar¹¹ Barrage in BandiPura district of occupied Jammu and Kashmir measures around 20 to 30 Kilometer the construction of Wullar barrage on this river has badly affected the power generation and irrigation capacity of Pakistan as it has highly depended on this river. The protests of Pakistan on this high-handedness of India failed to bear any fruit as the world community is silent¹².

The hostility of relations between the two countries continues since the independence of both the countries from the British Raj. The matters of Kashmir and water have been contentious issues. Pakistan has made serious efforts to bring India on the negotiation tables but it always turned from its promise to negotiate and find a solution to these problems.

India continues to building water projects. It is diverting the course of water channels of the rivers on which Pakistan has a legitimate right. A dam is under construction by India on the river Chenab just a 70 Km away from the borders of Pakistan¹³. It is really unfortunate that Pakistan is silent and failed to stop the India substantially on the construction of Baghliar Dam and Ratle Dam on the River Chenab. Pakistan has always adopted a policy of restraint and India takes it as a weakness of Pakistan. The people of Pakistan have started facing miseries and they are becoming impatient on such stubborn attitude of India. What is really astounding is that the world community has failed to abreast of the situation that in the South Asia both the countries of India and Pakistan are nuclear and when hunger crosses the barriers then the nuclear arsenals may be used against each other countries. India is in a state of denial and it should wake from such slumber. The terrorism of water unleashed by India must stop and Pakistan should also get out its political bickering to resolve the matter of water and let the world community know about it.

As of now the Indus Water Treaty signed in 1960 between India and Pakistan is still intact. The recent developments have surfaced this issue again. It would be important to know the current status and history of Indus River System¹⁴.

The total area of the Indus Basin is 365000 Square Miles inclusive of the area draining into the Himalayan River running into the Arabian Sea. It is indeed larger than the total area of Pakistan which is 310000 square miles or 794000 square kilometers. The total area of the Indus basin is 365,000 square miles and Pakistan occupies 217,000 Square Miles¹⁵. There is another important feature of the Indus River System is that it has the Indus River and also major eastern tributaries such as the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej Rivers. On its western side small number of rivers also joins the Indus River System. It is the Kabul River which joins the Indus River along with its tributary, the Swat River.

There is a need to understand the most complicated origins of the Indus River System. The rivers in this system originate and pass through number of countries. The Indus Rive originates in the Chinese controlled Tibet area and flows through Jammu and Kashmir. The River of Chenab originates in Indian side of HimaChalPardesh state and runs into Jammu and Kashmir. The River Jhelum originates in the Jammu and Kashmir area and flows into Pakistan. It finally merges into the River Chenab¹⁶.

It is the most important river system in the world as the Indus Water System lines up with Indus River and its five major eastern tributaries. The basin of Indus cultivated a large part of area during the times British India. There was well organized system of large canals which exist as of today¹⁷. At the time of partition of the Sub-Continent between India and Pakistan in 1947, the geographical realities were overlooked. Pakistan occupied the western parts of Punjab and the eastern parts of the Punjab fell into the lap of newly born India. The partition resulted into the division of Indus basin and conflicts over water arose between both the newly born states of India and Pakistan. When flow of water was halted by India into Pakistan, the matter immediately drew the attention of world community. The efforts of the World Bank ended into reaching an accord between India and Pakistan known as IWT Indus Water Treaty¹⁸.

This treaty enables India to make exclusive use of the water of Rivers Ravi, Sutlej and Beas. India can use water for agricultural purposes and also for the generation of power. India was under obligation as per agreement to make unhindered flow of the waters of River Indus, Jhelum and Chenab¹⁹.

However, India was allowed to make use of water for non-consumptive purposes, domestic and for the generation of hydro-electric purposes. But at the same time India was not allowed to construct any dam for the storage of water on the rivers allocated to Pakistan. As per agreement India was allowed to build runoff the river hydro-electric power projects for the purposes of generation of hydroelectric power. But it had no permission to make any construction for the purposes of dam or reservoir. The treaty has further provided that in case of dispute, the matter may be referred to the permanent Indus Commission comprising two engineers of high repute from either country. However, there is a provision as per which both the countries may refer a matter to the World Bank(as

the matter of Baghliar Dam was referred to WB) or to the Court of Arbitration for the settlement of any conflict.

It is stated with utmost chagrin that India inaugurated²⁰ the controversial Baghliar Hydro-electric Dam on 10th October, 2008 in clear violation of the Indus Water Treaty which was signed in 1960 and India was under obligation not to resort to it. This dam has been constructed by India on the River Chenab, the water of which Pakistan can exclusively use. The Indian move would hamper the smooth irrigation of agriculture in Pakistan. What is really alarming is that the agreement on the division of Indus water System between two neighboring countries hinges and its fate is unclear. If violation of this agreement continues by India, both the countries may engage in a war on the issue of water as Pakistan would in near future run into bad droughts²¹.

This situation further worsens when it transpires that the three rivers allocated to Pakistan from the occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The issue of Kashmir is a hotspot between both countries and they have fought three wars on this issue. The scholars and media men have warned that if the matter of water remains unresolved, a time comes when people out of famine may in desperate move ask for waging a war against India and the use of nuclear weapons may not be out of use to subdue the stubborn India. A renowned columnist Mr. Ayaz Amir has said that it should be the corner stone of Pakistan's foreign policy to pressurize India for water rights²². The India has also exclusive right of the use of waters of three rivers. It is the Sutlej River which originates from Tibet flowing through Himachal Pradesh and Punjab enters into the Chenab River²³. The case of the Rivers Beas and Ravi are not different. They are also like the Sutlej River run through Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. These rivers end up in the River Chenab²⁴.

From the above discourse it can easily be discerned that the Rivers of Chenab and Indus are very important. The River of Chenab alone combines the water of rivers like Jhelum, Beas, Sutlej and Ravi. Then it forms a single system of water which again joins the River of Indus in Pakistan²⁵.

Pakistan raised its eyebrows in 1990s when India started constructing a hydro-electric power project known as Baghliar dam²⁶ on the Chenab River in the Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir²⁷. Chenab River is the key tributary of the Indus. Any activity on this river is a cause of concern for Pakistan as India may strangle its livestock and agriculture and also floods.

It is not the only dam which is a cause of concern for Pakistan but there are as many as 67 projects which have been ensued by India²⁸. Baghliar, a 450 MW project was started in 1990 and finished on 10th October, 2008. On the eve of inauguration of Baghliar dam, Prime Minister of India Mr. Manmohan Singh said that 67 development projects are underway in the Jammu and Kashmir.

The discussion of water crisis ignites a popular discussion in Pakistan as it has deepened over the years. It is interesting to note that sixty years ago, 5000 cubic meter per capita water was available and in 2009 it declined to 1200 cubic meter per capita only. In 2020, it is expected that the water availability per capita would come to 800 cubic meters only²⁹.

Although, India is chiefly responsible for the onslaught of water crisis in Pakistan, yet, the factor of inundated population may not be overlooked. Pakistan

is now a country with the population of 200 Million and in very few years it may reach up to 250 Million. With the shortage of water and uncontrolled flood of population, shortage of food for innumerable mouths to feed will be a problem.

There is another sad story which Pakistan has authored itself. Baghliar undoubtedly as per experts' opinion will engender loss of 13 Million³⁰ of irrigated land around Chenab and River Ravi belt. The water shortage may force the farmers to change the crops. It may result into Pakistan's heavy dependence on the imports of food and thus heavy burden on the national exchequer. What is really alarming is the fact that Pakistan every year drains 368,119 cubic meters/second water of its rivers into the sea³¹. It has never built any dam after the decade of sixties. Although work on some dams have started but it's too late as much water has flown under the bridges. There is also internal rift amongst the provinces over the distribution of water. The IRSA³² (Indus River System Authority) usually faces criticism in this regards.

Pakistan and India have made talks keeping in view the Indus Water Treaty which was signed under the auspices of the World Bank. The agreement allows India not to build dams for the purposes of storage of water on the Indus, Chenab and Jhelum Rivers. However, at the same time it is allowed to make a limited use of the water. The run-of-the-river hydroelectric power projects can be built on the above mentioned rivers as per the agreement which India and Pakistan are both obliged to follow. It is also mandatory for India to provide Pakistan with all the technical details of any project which it wants to construct on the Rivers over which Pakistan has exclusive right to use.

In the case of construction of Baghliar dam by India in the Indian occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan raised objections to the technical specifications of the dam inclusive of designs, size, gated spillways and water capacity. Pakistan held talks with India on this matter till 2005. After which, Pakistan had to request the World Bank to intervene in the matter. The WB said that it was not the guarantor of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960. However, it appointed a neutral expert Professor Raymond Lafitte³³, a Swiss civil engineer by profession. He gave his final verdict in 2007 and agreed to minor changes in the Baghliar dam. It disappointed Pakistan as run-of-the-river dam construction on the Chenab River had halted a flow of water to Pakistan. He asked for the reduction of the height of dam by 1.5 meter. During the talks between India and Pakistan, the allowance which India was ready to give Pakistan was actually agreed to by the Professor Lafitte. There was another jolt to Pakistan on raising the matter to World Bank, it was decided that the matter over the construction of dam was not a serious dispute rather it was only a 'difference'. Declaring the issue as a difference, Pakistan cannot bring the matter to the Court of Arbitration as envisaged in the treaty.

Now it is a pity for the government of Pakistan that India can stop the flow of water on the River Chenab. In March 2008, the IBWC Chairman Hafiz Zahoor-ul-Hassan Dahir³⁴ claimed that during the whole month of January in 2008, the flow of water from the Chenab River was completely stopped by India. However has refuted Pakistan's claim. The same thing was happened in 1978 on the construction of salal dam by India in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Roznama Express stated in its editorial that Pakistan is confronted with a situation

when India may turn Pakistan a barren country having heavy reliance on the imported food.

Mr. Shah Mehmood Qureshi stated that a sentiment in Pakistan has arisen that agreement reached in 1960 under the auspices of the World Bank between India and Pakistan has proved a fiasco and led to the inequitable and unjust division of water.

The Indian aggression on water has sent a wave of rage and furiousness in Pakistani people. It goes without saying that India has never accepted the independence of Pakistan from his heart. It has always tried to destabilize Pakistan and propagated against it to earn a bad name for her. In the beginning it stopped the water flow to Pakistan and illegally occupied the Jammu and Kashmir over which the UN Security Council has passed the resolution to hold a plebiscite. The people of Pakistan seem justified to believe that India is its eternal enemy which is desirous to strangle the economy of Pakistan. The article published by the IBWC says that India wants to get the desired results through the Water Bomb which it failed to achieve by waging three wars over the past six decades.

The IBWC Chairman Dahir accused India of constructing more than sixty dams on the Rivers, the water of which flows to Pakistan. If it happens as India plans Pakistan may join the list of countries which face severe water crisis and severe famine and drought would become the ultimate destiny of Pakistan. He was also of the opinion that India's water terrorism is bigger than that of terrorism spread by the Taliban. Pakistan may face a fate like Ethiopia, Somalia and Chad. It was cautioned by him that India in future may acquire a capability to completely stop the water flow of Pakistan from the Chenab and Jhelum Rivers. Rana Jamaat Ali Shah, a former Commissioner of Indus Water of Pakistan³⁵ stated that India plans to completely barren Pakistan by stopping the flow of water allocated Rivers to Pakistan. He also said that India deprived Pakistan of 1.2 Million cusecs water during the construction of Baghliar dam.

Pakistan gave a proposal to install a telemetry system on the water projects built on the western rivers in the Indian Held Kashmir. To this the Indian Indus Water Commission said he would consult with the technical team whether the same should be installed or not. One is justified to think that the India has bad intention against Pakistan and wishes to turn the whole country a barren land by strangulating the flow of rivers to Pakistan.

The Nimmo Bazgo and Chutukhydel power projects are also underway by the Indians in the district of Leh of the occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Excessive storage capacity, low level of spillway and construction of freeboard were the main objections which Pakistanis expert pointed out. But India denied to the same as it in the case of other water projects and stole much of the water which was a due share of Pakistan³⁶.

The reports of ADB³⁷ (Asian Development Bank) and the WB (World Bank) are quite alarming to note as it says that the Pakistan is amongst the list of the most Water Stressed countries. As of now the per capita water capacity has reduced to 800 cubic meters as compared to 5000 cubic meters in the recent past. It is worthy to note that Islamabad lost as much as five billion rupees in crops due to construction of Baghliar dam.

It would not be out of place to mention the statement rendered by the secretary general of the United Nations Mr. Kofi Annan³⁸ with respect to the water scarcity and its distribution and conflict of the states. He said;

“Fierce competition over fresh water may well become a source of conflict and wars in future. But the water problems of our world need not be a cause of tension; they can also be a catalyst for cooperation. If we work together, a secure and sustainable water future can be ours.”

Keeping in mind the above statement of the former Secretary General to the UN, we can see that it is not the India and Pakistan only who are entangled in this imbroglio, rather the Sub-Saharan region, Middle-East and Asian states are also facing the same conflicts which have arisen due to the climate change and non-availability of water. This matter is also insoluble as there is no codified law on the subject. Although the Helsinki conference has been held on the issue of water conflicts amongst the state, yet it has failed to serve the purpose apparently.

Asia has the twelve basins and nine basins have been declared as in the highest risk flow. The situation of south Asia is critical with respect to water. It is facing constant stress due to inundating population explosion, rapid industrialization, and reclamation of land for the agriculture purposes.

As regards the case of Pakistan vis-à-vis India, Pakistan is in disadvantageous position. It is a downstream agrarian country where as India is upper riparian to the Indus water system. This is the weakness of Pakistan which India mischievously plays with Pakistan whenever it likes. It has not given any recognition to the IWT Indus Water Treaty which was signed in 1960 under the auspices of the World Bank. It has violated the terms and conditions of this agreement and constructed the dams on the rivers the water of which has been allocated to Pakistan. India has not only initiated its mischief from its own soil rather it has used the territory of Afghanistan with the construction of a dam on River Kabul. The Kama Hydroelectric Project is likely to give a blow to the Pakistan's inflow of water which may curtail the annual flow to Pakistan by about 0.5MAF. The river of Kabul contributes twenty percent water to the system of Indus³⁹.

The report of the Senator John Kerry is worth reading regarding the water dispute between India and Pakistan. The report cautions that India and Pakistan may go to the war on the water dispute. It is to be avoided to fulfill the designs of the US foreign policy. The report admits that the water flow to Pakistan has reduced by the acts of India owing to the construction of dams on the water of rivers allocated to Pakistan as per the IWT. It further says that the Indus Water Treaty signed in 1960 under the auspices of the World Bank may avert the possible conflict between both countries of the South Asia. This report has also mentioned the excesses committed by the India by constructing the Kishen Ganga dam (330 Mega Watt project on the Kishen Ganga River by India) on the tributary of Indus River.

It is interesting to note that the report gives impression that Pakistan should look after the ever increasing requirements of India in the shape of ever growing population. It has not talked about the infringement /violation of IWT by India which failed to honor its commitment. On one hand it says that the IWT has

become redundant and on the other hand it says that this agreement has maintained stability in the South Asian region for more than four decades. However, the experts have questioned the long term effectiveness of the treaty owing to the trouble in the Kashmir region from the rivers originate. It is really unfortunate that the world community is silent on this issue and does not press India to honor its commitment regarding the just distribution of water to Pakistan as per its requirements.

India is in the mad race of establishing its hegemony in the South Asia region and becoming an economic giant. For this he is violating all its national and international commitments. There is not even an iota of doubt that India has violated the IWT (Indus Water Treaty). By violating the same it has planned to construct as many as 62 dams on the Rivers Jhelum and Chenab. In future, one would hardly resist saying that the water of the Rivers of Jhelum and Chenab would not be available for Pakistan.

There is uproar in Pakistan already. Unfortunately, the lackluster approach of the political governments and ever compliant and in-efficient PAS/DMG class has played havoc with the interests of Pakistan. The Pakistan Muttahida Kisan Mahaz (MKM) has criticized the government's silence over Chenab River water 'piracy'. He is of the opinion that as per IWT, the India was under obligation to release 16,000 cusec Chenab water to Pakistan. Marala Ravi Link, Upper Chenab and BRB canals have faced a closure and cause an acute shortage of water for rabi crop. These canals met 75% of the requirements of the Punjab province.

The reasons for the water crisis, however, lead to the New Delhi's bad intention to starve Pakistan with drought and famine. It is really desirous to accomplish its dream of establishing hegemony in the region, be it through water, as it failed in the field of nuclear bomb. Further it took advantage of the political instability in Pakistan and slumbered and inefficient bureaucrats and technocrats.

To round off discussion on the topic, it may safely be concluded that the IWT Indus Water Treaty which was signed by the both neighboring countries in 1960 under the auspices of the World Bank has almost lost its utility. The run-of-the-river facility envisaged in the IWT is being misused by India. Unfortunately, Pakistan also lost its case on the Baghliar dam and it gave encouragement to India to zealously pursue as many as 60 dams in the occupied Kashmir on the Rivers of Jhelum and the Chenab. The per capita water cusec capacity is decreasing day by day. India intends to bully Pakistan by strangulating the flow of water to Pakistan. It is in the interest of Pakistan that its politicians, bureaucrats and technocrats should move out of their slumber and project the case of Pakistan in the international community.

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