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The Politics of Water Discourse in Pakistan

Medha Bisht

Abstract

The policy brief explores the evolving discourse on water issues in Pakistan where the process of political articulation, securitization and mobilization which often links water to Kashmir is studied. The rationale for undertaking such an approach is to provide useful insights to understand Pakistan's thinking on strategizing water. The primary research question therefore put to test is- whether Pakistan has a strategic design as far as the Indus waters is concerned? While this study has no intentions to under-estimate the water scarcity being experienced by Pakistan in any way, it aims to delink the issue of water politics from water security. The thrust of the study is to assess and analyze beliefs, interests, motivations and patterns of behaviour inside Pakistan regarding water issues.

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Authors' Email Address: medha.bisht@gmail.com

Executive Summary

This policy brief highlights the evolving discourse on water issues in Pakistan and explores the strategic design, if any, in Pakistan regarding these issues. Through the concept of stakeholder analysis, a two-tier approach is undertaken to understand Pakistan's position on water issues.

Understanding the complexities embedded in the contiguous irrigation system, Radcliffe had suggested that the Punjab water system should be jointly run by both countries. While, Jinnah responded by saying that he would rather have the Pakistan deserts than fertile fields watered courtesy the Hindus, Nehru retorted by saying that what India did with its rivers was India's affair. Water and Kashmir were delinked in the initial years from territorial aspirations.

The evolving political discourse can be appropriately understood by studying the discourse that has revolved around the construction of dams on the western rivers (Indus, Chenab, and Jhelum). This is more so as Pakistan has raised the ante against Indian plans to build run-of-the-river projects on the western rivers.

Baglihar and Kishenganga dams stand out as the most controversial projects, primarily because of the impact they have had on the domestic water discourse in Pakistan. Internally, political mobilisation on dam construction on the western rivers has stimulated anti-India sentiments among farmers' associations, politicians, fundamentalist groups and the army. Specific statements on India's water aggression have been issued by these pressure groups at various points of time.

Defence and tactical reasons, amongst others, are some arguments that have shaped perceptions, linking the debate regarding dams to hostile Indian intentions. Some argue that Indian intentions are directed towards flooding Pakistan during inter-state tensions and that flood waters could destroy Pakistani defences including Upper and Lower Chenab Canals in Sialkot region all the way to Panjnad in the south. The strategic importance of the Indian water projects in Kashmir is significant from the Pakistani perspective also because they could wreak havoc if dams in Kashmir were to collapse or malfunction.

On the tactical front it is argued that India could use the water as a bargaining chip to settle issues in other related areas. According to sources from the defence ministry, there are several strategic water canals in Pakistan. For instance the Bambanwala Ravi Bedian (BRB) link canal in the Sialkot-Lahore sector was used by Pakistan as fortification of its defences along the Indian borders during the 1965 war. In 2002, after India mobilised its forces as part of Operation Parakram, Pakistan diverted waters to these 'defence canals' increasing the existing severe water shortage of 50 percent to over 70 percent.

While this narrative throws light on the politicisation of water, linking water security to bilateral politics with respect to Jammu and Kashmir, it is pertinent to identify relevant stakeholders who participate in framing and politicising the public discourse. The overarching role of the army in the water resources of Pakistan goes back to the British colonial policy, when the British rewarded many Punjabis with land in the ‘canal colonies’. While in Punjab and Sindh the feudal establishment is primarily a result of British colonial practices and policies and even preferences of the current ruling class, political parties have also been active in linking water to the Kashmir issue. The linkages are apparent on two fronts: (a) their support base, and (b) their vested interests. Linking Kashmir to water suits the interests of political parties in as much as it helps divert debate away from inequitable land holdings, water scarcity, poor water policies and provincial conflicts on water rights.

Jihadists or hardline Islamic groups make up the third set of actors in the ‘troika’ responsible for framing the dominant water discourse. Statements by organizations such as the Lashkar e Toiba and Jammāt ud Dawa are symptomatic of efforts to ignite passions, possibly with a view to creating a platform for terrorist activity, both general and specific to dams in India or at the very least psychological pressure on people inhabiting the region.

Some lobbies including farmers’ organisations have tried to establish alternatives to water wars. The Punjab Water Council, a collective of farmers in Punjab, for instance has emphasised the need for “talking” water with India, arguing that talks could assuage Pakistani fears about Indian hydroelectric stations running Pakistan’s rivers dry. The Pakistan Muttahida Kisan Mahaz has urged the Pakistani government to approach the World Bank against India’s construction of dams on the western rivers. It has released a joint communiqué stating that 80 percent of the farmers had been affected due to stealing of the water of rivers Jhelum, Chenab and Indus by India as a result of building dams. It has also alleged that Pakistan’s agriculture would suffer losses of billions of rupees besides a threat of famine due to shortfall in river water supply. The Mahaz has also been aggressively advocating the construction of dams in Pakistan, in order to generate more electricity from hydropower.

It is evident that water is increasingly acquiring the status of a core issue in Pakistan. It is only a matter of time before it could explode. Water has potential as a “great emotional power” to mobilise the Pakistani people and have a cascading effect on India-Pakistan bilateral relations.

The direction of the water debate can not only freeze Pakistan’s negotiating postures in Indo-Pakistan bilateral talks but can also strengthen the voices of the advocates of large dams. Also, the jihadist advocacy on water wars can be strategically used to attract media attention. This linkage could also minimise the domestic voices of dissent against the inequitable land distribution pattern and ineffective water laws in Pakistan.

Land reforms in Pakistan have been a protracted process, marked by the conspicuous absence of political will.

While the policy brief has delineated the elite elements in Pakistan that contribute to constructing the political discourse through mobilisation strategies, it also points out that selling this strategy at the domestic level through securitisation of water can have a spill over effect. The role of the ‘troika’ and the way that the debate on water and Kashmir is taken forward in Pakistan could potentially shape the trajectory of Indo-Pakistan relations.

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The Politics of Water Discourse in Pakistan

Medha Bisht*

Introduction

This policy brief highlights the evolving discourse on water issues in Pakistan and explores the strategic design, if any, in Pakistan regarding these issues. Through the concept of stakeholder analysis, a two-tier approach is undertaken to understand Pakistan's position on water issues. The first category of stakeholders constitutes those who politicise the water discourse in Pakistan (the elite preferences). The second category includes those potentially affected groups or those engaged with the water discourse, for example civil society, community groups, affected people, academia, etc. While this study has no intention of underestimating the water scarcity facing Pakistan, it aims to delink the issue of water politics from water security.

Seeds of a Grand Strategy

Since the history of hydrological exploration can be traced to British India, the emergence of canal colonies initiated by the British provide useful pointers to understanding the interdependence between the people (Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus) inhabiting the Indus basin and water resources. Nine canal colonies were established by the British from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century.¹ The irrigation infrastructure which was introduced not only transformed waste land in West Punjab into fertile land, but also made Western Pakistan highly dependent on a continuous supply of water, thus creating in the process vested interests and stakes for the landholding class. Given this nature of dependence on canal waters, Michel A Aloys states that in the absence of canal colonies, no water dispute would have ensued, because without the modern irrigation system, the value of water would have been minimal and the prospect of diverting the flows non-existent.² The veracity of this statement was proven in 1947, when India and Pakistan witnessed partition and Sikh sentiments played an overarching role.

Understanding the complexities embedded in the contiguous irrigation system, Radcliffe had then suggested that the Punjab water system be jointly run by both

*Medha Bisht is an Associate Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA). The views expressed are that of the author and not of the IDSA. The author would like to thank Dr Javed Burki for his very valuable comments. A special note of thanks also goes to Ambassador Santosh Kumar and Mr Manohar Khushalani, who were very generous both with their comments, patience and time. Prof. Sheela Bajaj's contribution towards editing the policy brief is highly appreciated. The conclusions drawn and any shortcomings of the paper are the sole responsibility of the author.

¹ For details on canal colonies in Punjab, see Administrative Report of the Punjab Public Works Department, 1945-46. Cited in Imran Ali, *The Punjab under Imperialism 1885-1947*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

² Michel. A. Aloys, *The Indus Rivers: A Study of the Effects of Partition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 12.

countries. However this suggestion was rejected by Jinnah and Nehru. While, Jinnah responded by saying that he would rather have the Pakistan deserts than fertile fields watered courtesy the Hindus, Nehru retorted by saying that what India did with its rivers was India's affair. These statements from the two leaders of Pakistan and India reveal that, during the initial years water was delinked from territorial aspirations. With nationalism being the overriding emotion, it is only in recent times that water and Kashmir are being linked together more aggressively.

In 1959, even though F J Fowler wrote that for Pakistan the most important question relating to Kashmir was the threat of interference with vital water supplies, and there were concerns that the construction of reservoirs in the Upper Valleys of Chenab and Jhelum could be used to store surplus summer flow for use in autumn and winter, the linkage between Kashmir and water remained a minority view.³ The linkage however gathered pace during the rule of President Pervez Musharraf and hence after seems to be articulated more sharply in response to the Indian plans to construct run-of-the- river projects.

Political Edge: The Curtain Raiser

During the summer of 2010, farmers in the agricultural heartland of Pakistan noticed that the levels of both the river and groundwater had begun to fall. Pakistan held India responsible by saying that it was withholding millions of cubic feet of water upstream in Indian-administered Kashmir and storing it in the massive Baglihar dam in order to produce hydroelectricity. Asif Ali Zardari, Pakistan's President, stated: "The water crisis in Pakistan is directly linked to relations with India. Resolution could prevent an environmental catastrophe in South Asia, but failure to do so could fuel the fires of discontent that lead to extremism and terrorism."⁴

This excerpt from a report published in the *Telegraph* on March 26, 2009, can perhaps be called the curtain raiser to the existing water discourse in Pakistan, that seems to be directed towards India. The political narrative in Pakistan can be appropriately understood by studying the discourse that has revolved around the construction of dams on the western rivers (Indus, Chenab, and Jhelum).⁵ The works which Pakistan has

³ F J Fowler, "Some Problems of Water Distribution between East and West Punjab," *Geographical Review*, 40, no. 4, October 1950, p. 598.

⁴ "Pakistan accuses India of 'stealing' water," *Telegraph*, March 26, 2009, at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/5052150/Pakistan-accuses-India-of-stealing-water.html>

⁵ Perceptions are being shaped that India has plans to construct 62 dams/hydroelectric units on the Rivers Chenab and Jhelum thus enabling it to render these rivers dry by 2014. The reports argue that hydroelectric plants, both built or under construction, would enable India to block the entire water of the River Chenab for 20-25 days. India has also started construction of three dams Nimoo Bazgo, Dumkhar and Chutak on the River Indus, which will have "devastating impact" on Pakistan's northern areas. Chutak is under construction on the River Suru. Lower riparian fears loom high as analysts argue that in case any of these dams collapse or large quantity of water is deliberately released, it

most objected to are the Wullar Barrage and the Salal, Dulhasti, Baglihar, and Kishenganga dams amongst others. Recently, Pakistan has raised the ante against Indian plans to build run-of-the-river projects on the western rivers.

None of these dams are storage dams and therefore cannot possibly flood Pakistan. In order to put the contentious discourse in perspective, a detailed case study of two hydel projects, representing crises situations between India and Pakistan follows.

Baglihar and Kishenganga dams stand out as the most controversial projects, primarily because of the impact they have had on the water discourse. Internally, political mobilisation on dam construction on the western rivers has stoked anti-India sentiments among farmers' associations, politicians, fundamentalist groups and the army. Specific statements on India's water aggression have been issued by these pressure groups at various points of time.

Baglihar and Kishenganga Dams

The Baglihar dam was proposed to be built on the River Chenab in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir in 1999. Primarily a run- on- the- river project, with a potential of 450 MW, the project entered the contentious public domain in 2004-2005, when the design of the project was submitted to Pakistan by India. Upset with the design of the project, Pakistan invoked Article 9 (2) (a) of the 1960 Indus Water Treaty (IWT), formally approaching the World Bank to appoint a neutral expert to arbitrate over the Baglihar dispute. The height of the dam was proposed to be 844.5m, with a maximum water level of 840m. The dead storage level was proposed to be 835 m, pondage 77.7 million cubic meters (mcm) and the maximum flood intake 16,500 cusecs.

Pakistan's objection related to three main factors:

- *Design:* Pakistan questioned the probable maximum flood of 16,500 cusecs and the need for gated spillways. It also objected to the vertical space of free board (4.5 m) and proposed that 1.5m should be adequate.

would not only endanger the Bhasha dam but also submerge Skardu city and the airport. Stating that the Karakoram Highway (KKH) between Besham and Jaglot would also be washed away, these reports also argue that India has persuaded Afghanistan to create a water reservoir on the River Kabul, another tributary of the River Indus. Zahid Malik, "Is Pakistan Ready for Water War," *Pak Observer*, at: <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=20374>. Also: Tufail Ahmed, "Water Disputes between India and Pakistan: A potential Casus Belli," *The Henry Jackson Society*, July 31, 2009, at: <http://www.henryjacksonsociety.org/stories.asp?id=1230>. The Indian arguments apropos the hydel projects are that hydroelectric projects on the western rivers do not store water as the hydel projects mentioned are **run- of- the- river** projects. The most recent argument on the impact of Indian plans to build dams on the western rivers has been put forward by Danish Mustafa. Mustafa argues that the proposed Indian projects could give India the cumulative storage capacity to reduce substantively the water flows to Pakistan during low flow winter months. India however does not recognise this fear as legitimate. See Danish Mustafa, "Hydropolitics in Pakistan's Indus Basin," *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report* 261, November 2010, p. 7.

- *Pondage*: Pakistan objected to the planned Indian pondage of 37.7 mcm as being excessive, as it exceeded twice the pondage needed for firm power.
- *Placement of spillway gates*: Pakistan's objection was that the placement of the spillway gates and water intake were not at the highest level.

While India rejected most of Pakistan's objections, it did concede to reducing the design of free board by one meter. Run-of-the-river projects as per the provisions of the IWT were allowed and India in no way perceived it to be a violation of the treaty. In February 2007, Professor Raymond Lafitte, the neutral expert, passed his judgment on the various issues:

- Accepted the Indian figure of 16,500 cusecs for probable maximum flood.
- Reaffirmed the Indian position on gated spillways and considered them necessary for serving the twin purpose of sediment control and evacuation of design flood.
- Recommended a free board of 3m, refuting the Indian proposal and reducing its height by 1.5 m.
- Suggested the reduction of pondage level to 32.5 mcm, in contrast to the Indian proposal of 37.5 mcm and proposed that dead storage level be reduced by 1m.

The award did not do much to allay Pakistani objections. Rather, relations between the two countries became particularly sour over Baglihar subsequently in August 2008, when water had to be filled in the constructed dam. As Ramaswamy Iyer writes, options confronting India were primarily two. First, to leave the completed dam unfilled and postpone the filling by one year and second, fill it within the prescribed period, which could affect the shortfall in flows above Merala. The Indian government chose the second option.⁶ According to the IWT, a minimum flow of 55,000 cusecs has to be maintained above Merala and the filling should be done during the monsoon period between June 21 and August 31, 2010.

The Kishenganga dam has also aroused passions in Pakistan. Proposed to be 103 m high, the dam is built on the River Kishenganga, a tributary of the Jhelum. Projected to have a capacity of 330 MW, the project involves the diversion of Kishenganga waters to another tributary of the River Jhelum for the purpose of hydel-power generation. Pakistan's position is that the project would reduce the pressure of the Kishenganga (Neelum in Pakistan) and decrease the power generation capability of Pakistan's own project which is proposed to have a capacity of generating 969MW. Pakistan claims that, with the Kishenganga project, the capacity of Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project would be reduced by 20 percent, that is 100MW.⁷ Pakistan is constructing the 969 MW Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project, which is expected to be completed by 2016.

⁶ Ramaswamy Iyer, "India-Pakistan Water: An Overview," *South Asia Journal*, vol 29, 2010, p 125.

⁷ "Pakistan to move arbitration court on Kishanganga project," *Dawn*, May 3, 2010, at <http://archives.dawn.com/archives/44032>

The Indian project can be controversial on account of two IWT stipulations. First, A-III (2) and A-IV (6) which call for the maintenance of natural channels. Second, Annexure–D, 15 (3) which permits water released from a hydroelectric plant located on one tributary of the River Jhelum being delivered to another tributary.⁸ The project has implications for establishing rights on prior use as regards diversion of waters under the IWT. There is a condition that existing agricultural use and use for hydroelectric power generation must be protected. Iyer confirms that there is some existing agricultural use along the Kishenganga (Neelum) in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. These claims of existing uses, he argues would probably be contentious issues between the two countries, with reference to: (a) the crucial date for determining ‘existing use’, and (b) the quantum of existing use.⁹ Strategic consequences of dam building will be an area where India-Pakistan competition could gather pace.

The project however has moved to the International Court of Arbitration and Professor Kaiyan Homi Kaikobad, an international legal expert of Pakistani origin, has been appointed to lead the team.¹⁰ The Pakistan government is estimated to have allocated about \$10 million for the case.

Based on the aforementioned arguments one can say that while the judgement on Kishenganga hydel power project will be settled over a period of time, the discourse which has evolved in Pakistan around the construction of the dams on the three western rivers should perhaps be discussed in more detail.

The Objections: Through Pakistan’s Eyes

Some of the key grievances articulated by various groups with respect to Baglihar and Kishenganga relate to food security, agricultural, defence and tactical reasons and its linkages to the Kashmir rhetoric.

Some Pakistani experts assert that in order to control the waters of all rivers flowing into Pakistan through its territory, India is constructing the proposed dams. The dams could potentially reduce the flow of River Chenab (in case of Baglihar) during the critical rabi crop growing season (January-February) and cause loss to the Pakistani economy and agriculture by reducing water supplies of the country. It is argued that the stoppage can be well timed, linked to war-mongering and could spell disaster for Pakistan’s agricultural economy, forcing it to be an importer of essential agricultural products.¹¹

⁸ Ramaswamy Iyer, “India-Pakistan Water: An Overview,” *South Asia Journal*, vol 29, 2010.

⁹ Ramaswamy Iyer, “Arbitration & Kishenganga project,” *The Hindu*, June 25, 2010, at <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article485555.ece>

¹⁰ Pakistan to move arbitration court on Kishanganga project, *Dawn*, May 3, 2010, at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/19-construction-of-kishanganga-project-by-india-pakistan-to-move-arbitration-court-350-hh-01>.

¹¹ Hari Sud, *Indus Water Treaty and Gas Pipeline from Iran to India*, SAAG, February 7, 2005. http://www.saag.org/common/uploaded_files/paper1244.html. Also see: <http://www.pakistan.tv/videos-hafiz-saeed-accuses-india-of-imposing-%5BVTE5c2pTP44%5D.cfm>

Defence and tactical reasons are some other arguments that have shaped perceptions, thus linking the debate regarding dams to hostile Indian intentions. Some argue that Indian intentions are directed towards flooding Pakistan during inter-state tensions. This flood water it is said could destroy Pakistani defences including Upper and Lower Chenab Canals in Sialkot region and all the way to Panjnad in the south. According to Director General, Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Athar Abbas, the strategic importance of the Indian water projects in Kashmir is significant from the Pakistani perspective because the projects could wreak havoc if the dams in Kashmir were to collapse or malfunction.¹²

On the tactical front it is argued that India could use the water as a bargaining chip to settle issues in other related areas. The aforementioned arguments stem from the understanding and perception of canals as defence tools, which is well embedded in the military culture and techno-consciousness of Pakistan. According to sources from the defence ministry, there are several strategic water canals in Pakistan. For instance Bamberwala Ravi Bedian (BRB) link canal at Sialkot-Lahore sector is famous for its effectiveness as a water obstacle against the enemy forces during the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, when water was used for fortification of its defences along the Indian borders. The BRBL was specifically built in 1958 to link the Ravi in the north with the Sutlej in the south for the purpose of protecting Lahore. According to one source, Pakistan has built a series of 'defence canals' at strategic locations which are flooded at times of wars and tensions to prevent crossing by the Indian armour and artillery. For example, the Upper and Lower Chenab canals are specifically meant for defence purposes. In 2002, after India mobilised its forces as part of Operation Parakram subsequent to the December 13, 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament, Pakistan diverted waters to these 'defence canals' increasing the existing severe water shortage of 50 percent to over 70 percent.¹³ The statement of General JN Chaudhury, who was the Chief of Army Staff of the Indian Army (1962-1966), is an acknowledgement of the much anticipated lower riparian fears of Pakistan. General Chaudhury: spelling stated that, "All my experience teaches me never to start an operation with the crossing of an opposed water obstacle."¹⁴ This statement underlines the efficacy of canals as defensive infrastructures that serve as tank ditches and hinder enemy movement during adversarial times.

Establishing prior use on the western tributaries is another concern. Many in Pakistan believe that the Indian intent to build large dams is driven by the motivation to convince the international community that Pakistan was unable to use all the water

¹² *The News International*, August 17, 2010.

¹³ Zafar Choudhary, Baglihar and Other Chestnuts, Countercurrents.org, February 26, 2007, at <http://www.defence.pk/forums/strategic-geopolitical-issues/48309-pakistan-india-water-disputes-24.html>

<http://indiainformal.blogspot.com/2010/03/its-not-jammu-and-kashmir-actually-its.html>

¹⁴ Danish Mustafa, "Hydropolitics in Pakistan's Indus Basin," *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report* 261, November 2010.

given to it under the IWT.¹⁵ The current debate can be seen in context of the Kishenganga hydel water project which elevated the dam discourse to a distinct strategic level, where the clause on prior-use, makes dam construction a strategic and security imperative. However, in Pakistan, dams as security and strategic instruments in domestic discourse often run contrary to the demands of the co-riparians such as Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Kashmir-Pakistan nexus: Alienating the Kashmiris from Pakistan by projecting Pakistan as a state working against Kashmiri interests is another allegation against India by some Pakistani analysts. Many argue that India has tried to “enmesh the issue with the issue of Kashmiris getting access to sufficient electricity, whereas the two are not linked at all.”¹⁶ This is particularly so, given the discourse in Kashmir that considers the division of waters as unfair. The Kashmiris claim that not only has the Treaty impacted the state’s agricultural growth in a negative way, but has also grossly affected the hydropower potential of 20,000 MW.¹⁷ For instance, motions have been moved by legislators in the state assembly asking the central government to review the Treaty and pay compensation to the state.¹⁸

The Stakeholders

While the political narrative mentioned above does throw some light on the politicisation of water discourse, thus linking water security to bilateral politics, it is pertinent to isolate the relevant stakeholders who participate in framing and politicising the water discourse with respect to Kashmir in the public discourse. Some important stakeholders contributing to the discourse are the army, jihadists, politicians and other hardline groups particularly representing farmers’ organisations, and engineer’s fora.

Considering the linkages between potential water scarcities and water security, one could argue that water and national security seem to be an overarching concern. If one compares the discourse of Baglihar in the initial years with the Kishenganga, one cannot fail to notice that, while the army had initially been reticent on the issue of Baglihar, in the case of the Kishenganga issue, such reticence has been missing. This argument is based on the fact that opposition to Baglihar came much later during the Musharraf years and it was only in 2004 that Pakistan took a positional stand on the dam. Harris Gazdar, while criticising Musharraf’s delayed response on the issue has attributed it to the lack of interest of the army in dealing with governance issues. Thus till the 1990s, the water discourse in Pakistan can be considered to be overtly domestic.

15 “Baglihar Dam and Implication for Pakistan,” June 8, 2010, at <http://viewstonews.com/index.php/baglihar-dam-and-implication-for-pakistan/uncategorized>

16 Shireen Mazari, “The Baglihar Dam and the Indus Water Treaty,” <http://www.cssforum.com.pk/css-compulsory-subjects/current-affairs/current-affairs-notes/18708-baglihar-dam-indus-water-treaty.html>

17 Shaheen et al, “Sustaining energy and food security in trans-boundary river system: The Case of Indus Basin,”

18 Athar Parvaiz, “India/Pakistan: Indus Water Treaty Agitates Kashmiris”IPS News, October 15, 2008, at <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=44268>

It would therefore not be an exaggeration to state that the manifestation of the domestic complexities only became apparent in the 1990s, and this perhaps paved the way for an aggressive posturing on water issues. Gazdar writes that the civilian government would have responded to the issue more urgently, given the political stakes of the parties and the significant vote bank the mainstream parties have amongst the people most affected by water issues.¹⁹

If one compares the army's response to the Kishenganga dam, it is directly related to strategic considerations. This is evident from General Ashfaq Kiyani's statement during the Pakistan-United States strategic dialogue in March 2010, when the General raised the issue with US officials.²⁰ The Pakistani official was quoted in the media as stating that, the Pakistan army was an 'India-centric institution', and the "reality will not change in any significant way until the Kashmir issue and water disputes are resolved."²¹ This elevation of water as a core issue along with Kashmir by Pakistan's military establishment highlights the strategic aspect of equating water with Kashmir.

Given these statements, it is pertinent that one explores the rationality of the army's response, especially when such articulations appear to be more frequently used especially since 2008.²² The overarching role of the army in the water resources of Pakistan goes back to the British colonial policy, when the British rewarded many Punjabis with land in the 'canal colonies'.

Owing to British generosity, the position of the Punjabis who served the army got socially elevated and a structure of landholding class emerged. This societal structure engineered two distinct categories of farmers: (a) the occupancy tenants, who had statutory rights to occupy the land; and (b) simple tenants, who occupied land on the basis of a contract with their landlord.²³ While in Punjab, Punjabis got an upper hand and dominated land ownership patterns, this feudal establishment also resonated in Sindh as almost half of the tenant farmers in Pakistan are in Sindh.²⁴ If one looks at the level of opposition, facts on the grounds are quite alarming both in Sindh and Punjab.

In 2000, Pakistan's Ministry of Defence unilaterally imposed a cash payment contract system for the tenants occupying the 17,000-acre Okara military farms in the Okara

¹⁹ Haris Gazdar, "Baglihar and Politics of Water: A Historical Perspective from Pakistan," *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 26, 2005, p. 815.

²⁰ "Delhi's Water terror: Floods and Parched Land," *Dawn*, March 29, 2010, at <http://thedawn.com.pk/2010/03/29/delhis-water-terror-floods-and-parched-land/>

²¹ "General Kayani's Quiet Coup," *The Hindu*, August 3, 2010, at <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article548266.ece?homepage=true>

²² It was Musharraf who first spoke about the link between water and Kashmir in his book in 2005.

²³ The Punjab Tenancy Act of 1887 governs the legal relationship between the landlords who own and the tenant farmers who occupy rural land in the Punjab. See, "[Soiled Hands: The Pakistan Army's Repression of the Punjab Farmers' Movement](#)," *Human Rights Watch*, July 20, 2004, at <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11997/section/7>

²⁴ Ahmed Salim, "Peasant Land Right Movement in Pakistan," Islamabad, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, July 2008, p10.

district of Punjab. This cash contract system was intended to replace the harvest shares, known as the *battai* system (sharecropping). Perceiving the contract system as a means to impose monopoly, the tenants refused to pay rent, staging a variety of protests, and thus confronting the army for the first time in the public domain. According to one observer, the Okara farm dispute has turned into a symbol of resentment people have about the army's monopolisation of power and resources.²⁵

A similar case of resentment has also been noticed in the Badin district in southern Sindh, adjacent to the Indian border. Owing to its geo-strategic location, Badin has been perceived as a sensitive area by the establishment, thus necessitating the presence of rangers. However, they have been accused of resorting to mistreatment for personal and commercial gain. Some scholars note that they run a 'business empire' of 30 commercial concerns.²⁶ Similar stories are reported elsewhere. According to a report published in the *Dawn*, Corps IV of the Pakistani army has a firing range near the tail of a link canal in the Bahawalpur region in south Punjab. The army has leased out the land to private people, called army contractors, and illegal pipes which lift water to pumps have been laid along with establishing unauthorised outlets to divert water. In 2008, it was reported that in Sheikhpura district alone, the army formations had laid 44 pipes on nine different channels on the Upper Chenab Canal. These developments, which have been fiercely debated by the Pakistani media, have brought the army into a negative light, with public debate and perception being shaped against them. Given these developments, it would be no exaggeration to state that in order to divert the attention, framing and selling the Kashmir discourse by linking it to domestic water shortages could be a potential tool to broaden the zone of domestic consensus in Pakistan.

While in Punjab and Sindh the feudal establishment is primarily a result of British colonial practices and policies and even a product of the preferences of the ruling class, political parties have also been active in linking water to the Kashmir issue. The linkages between land and water interests amongst the political class are apparent on two fronts: (a) their support base, and (b) their vested interests.

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is an example of how local landlords have often scuttled the rights of the peasantry for their own interests. The collective which gave voice to the grievances of the peasants in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was the *kisan jirga*, formed under the leadership of Khan Abdul Jabbar Khan. The *jirga* aimed to check the illegal eviction of peasants, abolition of permanent settlements, and protection against oppression by khans and nawabs. Instances of forced eviction in fertile areas of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa are mostly documented in the context of Charsadda, Peshawar, where an alliance between the Awami National Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami was formed. Since most landlords were members of the political party, a peasant eviction

²⁵ John Lancaster, "Fighting an Army Empire" *Washington Post*. June 29, 2003. p A-19.

²⁶ Mehtab Ali Shah, "Ferment in Sindh: Mistreatment of Fishermen in Badin," *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 5-11, 2005, p 931.

policy was followed. However as collective resistance towards land alienation was weak in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa due to the absence of organised movements, the impact on shaping political will has been minimal. This is primarily due to the linkages which existed between landlords and political parties. For instance, during the 1951 provincial election, the lower house had a majority of landlords from the North West Frontier Province.

Also post-1947, after the creation of a separate Pakistani state, the policy on land reforms implemented by the respective governments is indicative of the entrenched interests of the land bureaucracy. Even when reforms were launched, they were biased and failed to restrict the power of landlords. Reclamation of land by the state was questioned in the Federal Shariat Court on the ground that it was contrary to Islamic jurisdiction. Political developments during the 1970s-80s indicate that landlords emerged as a strong lobby in the government. Further, the political history of the Bhutto years reveals that a new alliance of landlords, petty bourgeoisie and young radicals formed the political base of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP).²⁷

Linking Kashmir to water suits the interests of political parties in as much as it helps divert debate away from inequitable land holdings, water scarcity, poor water policies and provincial conflicts on water rights. Recently Yusuf Raza Gilani, Pakistan's Prime Minister, put water on a par with Kashmir, stating that, "we want the world to concentrate so that with India we resolve all our core issues including Jammu and Kashmir and water."²⁸ Such concerns on water shortages have also been articulated by various political parties. Arvind Gupta provides a sample of some linkages.²⁹

- *Dawn* quoted the former Foreign Minister, Sardar Asif Ali as saying that "if India continues to deny Pakistan its due share, it can lead to a war between the two countries." (*Dawn*, January 18, 2010).
- PML (Q) Chief, Chaudhary Sujat Hussain, said that the water crisis between Pakistan and India could become more serious than terrorism and can result in a war (*Dawn*, January 18, 2010).
- Majid Nizami, Chief Editor of the *Nawi Waqt* group of newspapers, said that "Pakistan can become a desert within the next 10 to 15 years. We should show upright posture or otherwise prepare for a *nuclear war*." (*Dawn*, January 18, 2010).

²⁷ Jamil Rashid, "Economic Causes of Political Crises in Pakistan," *Developing Economies*, 16 (2), June 1978.

²⁸ Delhi Water Terror Floods and Parched Land, *Dawn News*, April 1, 2010, at: <http://thedawn.com.pk/2010/03/29/delhis-water-terror-floods-and-parched-land/>

²⁹ Arvind Gupta, "Vicious Anti-India Propaganda in Pakistan on Water issues," *IDSAs Web Comment*, March 29, 2010, at :http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/Viciousanti-IndiapropagandainPakistanonWaterissues_agupta_290310

- Members of the Punjab Assembly passed a resolution to deny India trade transit facility until the resolution of the Kashmir dispute and issues related to water distribution (*Dawn*, January 27, 2010).
- Member of the Punjab Assembly Warris Khalo said that India would “remain an enemy” until the Kashmir dispute and water issues are resolved. (*Dawn*, January 27, 2010).
- Palwasha Khan, Member of National Assembly, accused India of perpetrating “water terrorism” against Pakistan and said that “experts foresee war over the water issue in the future and any war in this region would be no less than a nuclear war.” (*Daily Times* February 17, 2010).
- In a recent debate in Pakistan’s National Assembly, several members urged the government to impress on New Delhi “not to use” Pakistan’s share of water (*Daily Times*, February 25, 2010).
- Dr Manzur Ejaz, a commentator, writing in *Daily Times* (March 3, 2010) warned that “unless Pakistan was assured on the supply of water, it will never abandon the proxies that can keep India on its toes by destabilizing Kashmir.” He further added: “for Pakistan the territory of Kashmir may not be as important as the water issue.”

These comments somewhere indicate that Kashmir’s waters are on a boil in Pakistan. It is only a matter of time when the issue of water will explode. Water can be an issue of “great emotional power” to mobilise the Pakistani people that can have a cascading effect on India-Pakistan bilateral relations.³⁰ Linked with nuclear threats it can set a bad negotiating and bargaining precedent, thus attracting the attention of external powers to the South Asian region.

Jihadists or religious Islamic and hardline groups are another set of actors responsible for framing the water issue in the Indian context. “Only jihad can help get water released to Pakistan, so people should rise up”, this statement by Hafiz Sayeed of Jammāt ud Dawa is symptomatic of the efforts to ignite passions with a view to creating a platform for terrorist activity, both general and specific to dams in India. Pakistan-based terror outfits like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) are reportedly training their cadres in cliff-climbing, swimming across water channels and handling explosives, possibly with the intention of attacking the Bhakra dam, located near the border between Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. At the very least, such indications serve to mount psychological pressure on people inhabiting the region.³¹

³⁰ Ramaswamy Iyer, “India-Pakistan Water: An Overview,” fn. 24, p. 121.

³¹ “No terror attack can damage Bhakra, says dam builder,” *Deccan Herald*, July 21, 2011, at: <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/177995/no-terror-attack-can-damage.html> and “Punjab government to discuss Bhakra security,” *IANS*, July 18, 2011, <http://in.news.yahoo.com/punjab-government-discuss-bhakra-security-132847453.html>

Some hardliner groups also include farmers' organisations, which have tried to establish linkages against water wars. The Punjab Water Council, a collective of farmers in Punjab, for instance has emphasised the need for "talking" water with India. Arguments are based on the fact that talks could assuage Pakistani fears that Indian hydroelectric stations could run Pakistan's rivers dry. These collectives have further stated that "If diversions like the Kishenganga project are not settled as it should be, then we have serious apprehensions that diversions from other rivers would also be made and precedents would be set."³²

Pakistan Muttahida Kisan Mahaz is a farmers' collective, which has urged the Pakistani government to approach the World Bank against India's construction of dams on the western rivers.³³ Led by Muhammad Ayub Mayo, the collective has been mobilising farmers internally in partnership with other organisations. It has released a joint communiqué stating that 80 percent of the farmers had been affected due to stealing of the water of rivers Jhelum, Chenab and Indus by India as result of building dams. It has also alleged that Pakistan's agriculture would suffer losses of billions of rupees besides a threat of famine due to shortfall in river water supply.³⁴ The Mahaz, which emerged as the lobby group for farmers in Pakistan, has also been aggressively advocating the construction of dams in Pakistan, in order to generate more electricity from hydropower. War against India has also been suggested to arouse public opinion.³⁵ The linkage between water and terrorism is a growing discourse in other circles. For instance Riaz Haq³⁶ asserts that there is (in Pakistan) the fear of growth in social discontent, terrorism and instability from the potential ravages of water scarcity in the form of crop failures and poverty.³⁷

Another group which has been attributing the water crises in Pakistan to the building of dams in India is the Engineers Study Forum, a water experts' panel. According to a report released by the panel, India is stealing 15-20 percent of water from western rivers causing \$ 12 billion loss to agriculture in Pakistan. It further adds, total water

³²"Water Row Key to India-Pak Rivalry," *Daily Times*, July 16, 2010, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\07\16\story_16-7-2010_pg1_9

³³ "Rally against Indian water aggression," *The Nation*, May 31, 2010, <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Lahore/31-May-2010/Rally-against-Indian-water-aggression>

³⁴ "Movement against water suspension by India," *The Dawn*, December 14, 2009, at <http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/national/movement-against-water-suspension-by-india-429>

³⁵ [Rally Against India Water Agression](http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Lahore/31-May-2010/Rally-against-Indian-water-aggression), *The Nation*, May 31, 2010, at <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Lahore/31-May-2010/Rally-against-Indian-water-aggression> and Govt should take serious notice of water closure in Chenab by India: Ayub Mayo, *One Pakistan*, January 27, 2010, at <http://www.onepakistan.com/news/national/28985-Govt-should-take-serious-notice-water-closure-Chenab-India-Ayub-Mayo.html>

³⁶ Riaz Haq is Founder and President of PakAlumni Worldwide, a global social network for Pakistanis, South Asians. He possesses a MS degree in electrical engineering from the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

³⁷ World Water Day: Water Scarcity Hurting Pakistan, *South Asia Investor Review*, March 22, 2011, at <http://southasiainvestor.blogspot.com/2009/03/world-water-day-water-scarcity-hurting.html>

availability of the western rivers is 125.6 MAF, out of which India steals a big chunk of water imposing economic cost in terms of agricultural loss to Pakistan. The loss is estimated at \$ 12 billion per year.³⁸

Thus stakeholders in the Pakistani political discourse linking Kashmir to water form a troika - the army, hardliners and political parties.

Exploring the Strategic Contours

The reason why an exclusive emphasis has been given to the political discourse in Pakistan is the deteriorating water governance in Pakistan. Domestic aspects of water governance and management in Pakistan indicate that some of the main reasons for water scarcity are archaic laws, absence of water-user rights, non-accountability of water bureaucracy and over-dependence on techno-centric models exacerbated by bad design and lower riparian opposition. Water leakage, transmission losses, and the under-pricing of water are some other contributory factors. It is pertinent to note that any reform in the water sector will necessitate multi-level restructuring of the system and revision of water rights, an issue closely related to land rights. Given the domestic costs for addressing these issues, it is argued that the pay-offs of linking water and Kashmir can be appealing. Also the water and Kashmir linkage in the public domain would strengthen strategies for domestic mobilisation. Such linkages can also play an influential role in shaping the contours of Pakistan's foreign policy objectives vis-a-vis India.

The Context in Operation

Hassan Abbas in *Pakistan Can Defy All Odds* traces the history of Pakistan to three key elements that have shaped its identity over a period of years. These are: (i) the contested debate on the idea of Pakistan; (ii) the turbulent history of democracy in Pakistan; and (iii) the India-Pakistan rivalry. Similarly Ijaz Khan in *Pakistan's Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Making* develops an understanding of the strategic and foreign policy culture in terms of decision-making structures being driven by, inter alia, an India-centric approach. While such themes resonate across literature from both Pakistan and India, the recent discourse on water tends to view such political concerns as diversionary tactics. According to this 'scapegoating thesis', leaders exploit foreign conflict for the purpose of averting revolution and solidifying their own hold over their nations.³⁹ However, the contemporary Pakistani discourse on water cannot be termed as such entirely since it represents an element of an evolving consensus in the Pakistan polity. This consensus, or 'the power of opinion' in EH Carr's

³⁸ India stealing water causing \$ 12 bln loss to Pakistan, *Pakistan Daily*, February 8, 2010, <http://www.daily.pk/india-stealing-water-causing-12-bln-loss-to-pakistan-15770/>

³⁹ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton, 1996., p. 15.

phraseology, is reflected in the convergence of views between the army, political parties and the hardliners.

Given these arguments it is pertinent to understand, how the elite in Pakistan perceive the solution to water resources and, how the masses perceive the issues of water resources. How elite preferences and mass perceptions, interact with water and the Kashmir issue as key variables shall be the focus of the conclusion.

Elite Preferences and Pakistan's Foreign Policy

The elite model assumes that power is concentrated within some leading groups, who are able to dominate politics and society. The model in relation to security policy is defined as an analytical framework which emphasises that statecraft is not simply a function of the particular geo-strategic risks and opportunities presented by a given systemic environment, but is a consequence of elite preferences and perceptions of the external environment.⁴⁰ The fundamental assumption for discussing elite perception and preference as a causal variable in informing state's policy is that, "states do not make policy, governments through their leaders do."⁴¹ Thus the model emphasises that there is a shared perception among the elite about the nature of the problem.

In the empirical context Pakistan's water policy vis-a-vis Kashmir seems to fit in well within this framework of explanation. The construction of the 'elite perception' in Pakistan can be effectively divided into three phases. While the first two phases relate to the perceptions and beliefs formed during the partition years and the responses shaped during the IWT, the third phase can be gauged from the Musharraf formula proposed in 2004 and the debate thereafter.

It was in 2004, that Musharraf proposed a model for resolving the Kashmir issue. Postulating the Chenab formula,⁴² it was argued that the formula would allow Pakistan to gain access to important rivers and also those areas with a predominant Muslim population. The Chenab formula was also a point of discussion between Nawaz Sharif and Atal Bihari Vajpayee's track II level talks in 1999. The talks were held post-Sharif -- Musharraf parleys, where Musharraf had impressed on Sharif that the Chenab

⁴⁰ Ibid., p 169.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 170.

⁴² The Chenab Formula seeks to divide Kashmir along the River Chenab, which flows down from Kashmir into Punjab, separating the Muslim-majority areas from the Hindu and Buddhist-dominated ones. The river flows through the mountainous areas of Doda, Ramban, Surukot, Salat, Reasi and Akhnoor and enters Punjab (Pakistan) at Head Marala. India has built the Salal dam on it under the IWT. The Kashmir Valley has a 98 percent Muslim population; out of the six districts of Jammu province almost three Muslim-majority districts fall on the right bank of the Chenab and will fall to Pakistan if the river is made the new boundary. According to some Pakistani experts, if the Chenab Formula is accepted, 80 percent of the territory of the original State, including POK and the Northern Areas, will become part of Pakistan. See, <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2123/stories/20041119004002500.htm>

formula could be an effective way to resolve the Kashmir dispute.⁴³ Water and Kashmir were thus linked to serve strategic ends of Pakistan, and the issue needs to be seen in this perspective.

The second element in the shaping the strategic contours is managing and shaping the perception of the masses. The mass perceptions towards the water sector include institutional effectiveness, feudal patterns of land ownership and lack of water rights. In fact, one of the primary reasons for floods in Pakistan in 2010 was the extensive deforestation that has taken place in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. Many reports available in the media claim that illegal tree cutting was carried out on a large scale along the canal banks and the riverine forests in northern Sindh. The main reason for this, as pointed out, was the timber mafia whose actions often go unchecked due to their links with the political leadership.⁴⁴ With legal frameworks playing a negligible role, the overarching framework on water rights and use- The Canal and Drainage Act, 1873, is indicative of a similar narrative. A legacy of the British colonial policy, the 1873 Act strengthens the state, thus recognising its strong right to administer water policies. It gives enormous power to the state, thus marginalising the voices of the people at large. When the state leadership is not responsible to the people there can be a great deal of misuse of power. Not only does it highlights lack of accountability but also provides space for water politics instead of water security.

Selling a national security issue to the domestic public has been considered as one of the main factors in strengthening the national power of the country. According to the Christenson, selling a national security agenda to the public is important to overcome domestic hurdles. Owing to lack of information, the domestic population can have their own opinion and policy responses to certain issues. It is for this reason that in order to bridge the information gap the “leaders sell expensive policies by stating them in easily digestible ways.” Also it has been noted that in order to generate consensus, the security threat has to be posed as an existential threat, as citizens are less likely to react to long-term security threats. Presenting an issue as a threat and not just vulnerability is therefore an important part of the process. This process has also been termed as ‘securitisation’ by Barry Buzan.⁴⁵ An important element which explains the process of securitisation is the ‘Speech Act’.⁴⁶ The actors contributing to the speech act are the

⁴³ Arif Bahhar, Water can it become the reason for an Indo-Pakistan War, *Akbar-e- Jehan*, June 2005.

⁴⁴ Medha Bisht, Pakistan Floods: Causes and Consequences, IDSA Web Comment, August 19, 2010, at: http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/PakistanFloodsCausesandConsequences_mbisht_190810

⁴⁵ As per ‘speech act’ securitisation becomes a question of language politics, i.e. it is indicative of the process through which a threat is presented as a security issue. In the words of Ole Weaver “by uttering security, a state representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it. See Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jap de Wilde, proponents of the Copenhagen school in international relations literature have argued that any issue which is presented as an existential threat, can be termed as a security threat. The process, which frames an issue as a security threat, has been termed by them as “securitisation”.

⁴⁶ Ole Weaver, *Securitization and Desecuritization* in Ronnie D Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 8.

army, the politicians and the hardliners. The aforementioned analysis reflects that mobilisation around water and Kashmir issue being undertaken to generate public opinion. Water politics and water security in Pakistan are therefore interacting and could create a scenario that can be detrimental to the prospect of a cooperative relationship between India and Pakistan.

The direction of the water debate can not only freeze Pakistan's negotiating postures in Indo-Pakistan bilateral talks but can also strengthen the voices of the advocates of large dams. For instance, the opposition to large dams and barrages can be managed at the domestic level on the plea that the IWT allows India to build dams, thus Pakistan should speed up its programme. This can give a fillip to dam proponents, a lobby which is already strong in Pakistan.

Also, the jihadist advocacy on water wars can be strategically used to attract media attention. This linkage could also minimise the domestic voices of dissent against the inequitable land distribution pattern and ineffective water laws in Pakistan. Land reforms in Pakistan have been a protracted process, marked by the conspicuous absence of political will. The military-politician-bureaucrat nexus which has impeded much of the reforms could become important players in Pakistan.⁴⁷ Further mobilised resources can be used against India, as has happened in the history of Pakistan before. The anti-India focus could also give the needed legitimacy to the army to undertake certain actions in the ostensible interests of national security.

In the context of Pakistan, the elements that go into political discourse construction, through the mobilisation strategies of the perceived 'troika' are therefore important. While the policy brief has delineated the elite perception regarding water issues, it also points out that selling this strategy at the domestic level through securitisation of water can jeopardise chances of bonhomie between India and Pakistan. The presence and role of the 'troika' and the way that the debate on water and Kashmir is taken forward in Pakistan would potentially shape the trajectory of Indo-Pakistan relations.

Given this analysis, it would be appropriate to ask the last question that the study posed at the outset: Do these insights portend the making of the grand strategic design in Pakistan? While the answer to this question is not self evident, three factors can perhaps be outlined, which could be most proximate to reality.

First, history is a witness to fact that the loss of Kashmir drives the territorial aspirations of Pakistan. The Pakistani invasion of Jammu and Kashmir in 1948 was reflective of its intent to capture water resources. Also, subsequent construction of barrages, upstream on the Indus has not only been met with hostility but with firm opposition. The loss of Madhopur and Ferozepur headworks exacerbated Pakistan's water vulnerabilities, leading to inter-provincial faultlines between Sindh and Punjab.

⁴⁷ Farzana Sheikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, London: Hurst & Company, 2010, pp. 116-140.

Although it has so far acquiesced to domestic opposition, the need for water storage sites and the IWT rights related to pre-existing uses could drive the construction of big dams in Pakistan. At the same time, the grand strategy would be critical of Indian attempts at dam building upstream, holding India responsible for the shortages of water that Pakistan has been experiencing.

Second, politics in Pakistan has been a domain of opportunists forming convenient alliances to sustain power. The existing institutionalisation of water bureaucracy and landed aristocracy have greatly impeded the pace of water reforms in Pakistan. Given the nature of nepotism and parochial practices, water management policies have failed, with planning and design much influenced by technocratic solutions. These domestic constraints make anti-India slogans appealing. Consistent effort by the Pakistani establishment to politicise the discourse on water within an India-centric framework is a pointer to this evolving pattern. The ‘troika’ approach identified in this monograph has been underlined to explain how the domestic debate is being formulated in Pakistan. This approach attempts to bridge the gap between elite preferences and mass perceptions.

Third, from the economic perspective, it has been pointed out that water supports the agricultural base and livelihood of common people in Pakistan. While its small industrial base makes the agricultural sector more important, Pakistan’s economic growth in the coming years will be determined by the energy generation inside the country. As prospects of energy cooperation between India and Pakistan are low given the nature of the current relationship, territorial aspirations in Kashmir will remain attractive. Controlling the headwaters of western rivers therefore will be a strategic aim for long-term water and energy security. It will also de-motivate Pakistan from any re-negotiation of the IWT. Water politics within Pakistan will need to be situated within this framework.

It would be interesting to observe how the water discourse between Pakistan and India unfolds in future. If there is a Pakistani grand strategy in the making, it could minimise prospects of India-Pakistan rapprochement, or raise firm opposition to Indo-Pak talks. It could also sideline innovative and participatory initiatives on water management in Pakistan at the domestic level. These dangers have to be addressed if the issue of water security is to be delinked from politics.



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Core - 6A, 4th Floor, India Habitat Centre,
Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110003
INDIA