The Politics of Water Discourse in Pakistan

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The Political Narrative

- Distrust and Upper Riparian Fears
- Defence and Tactical Reasons
- Establishing prior Use
- Linkages to Kashmir

Distrust & Upper Riparian Fears

- India is constructing dams to control the waters flowing through its territory.

- Dams could reduce the flow of Chenab, during the rabi season—thus impacting agriculture and economy of Pakistan.

- Stoppage can be 'well-timed'—linked to war mongering, forcing Pakistan to be an importer of essential agricultural products.

Defence and Tactical Reasons

- Indian intentions are directed towards flooding Pakistan—could destroy Pakistani defenses.
- Canals can be used as defence tools—strategic water obstacles.
- Water could be used as the bargaining chip to settle issues in other relate areas.

Strategic Importance of Indian water projects in Kashmir is significant because the projects could wreak havoc if the dams in Kashmir were to collapse and mal-function.

DG, ISPR, Pakistan

Prior Use

- Establishing 'prior use' on Western tributaries is another concern.

- The concept of prior use elevates the discourse to a strategic level, making dam construction a security competition.

Kashmir-Pakistan Nexus

- Alienates the Kashmiris from Pakistan, by projecting Pakistan as a state working against the interests of Kashmir.

- There is a general perception in Kashmir, that the division of waters on the basis of IWT was unfair.

- There have been motions passed by the state legislature, asking the central government to review the treaty and pay compensation to the state.

The Stakeholders

- Army
- Politicians
- Fundamentalist Groups
- Hardliners
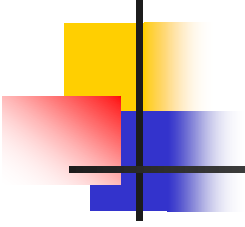
(Farmer Organisations & Engineer's Fora)

Do we need to take the discourse seriously?

- Deteriorating water governance
- Tool for Domestic Mobilisation
- Elites Perception and Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Impact

- Freeze India-Pakistan Relations.
- Jihadist Advocacy can be strategically used to attract media attention
- Integrated Water Management Approaches Take a back Seat-- Domestic drive to build more storage sites.

Thank You