

Water Conflict and Cooperation between India and Pakistan: Opportunities and Challenges for Ensuring Food Security

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Abstract

At the international level, there have been 37 episodes of violence between states over water and over 200 water treaties have been negotiated in last about six decades. Indus Water Treaty (IWT) between India and Pakistan has survived since September 1960 even during conflicts. This indicates that even the most hostile nations have a capacity for water cooperation and the institutions created to avert conflicts have extraordinary resilience. The negotiation related to IWT took about a decade, which reflects the sensitivity of the issues involved in water negotiation and cooperation. In countries, where cooperation fails to develop or breaks down, losses are immense specifically for the poor population. At the same time, the benefits from cooperation are immense such as the costs averted by reducing conflicts, improved trade, transport, telecommunications and labour markets. The basin level water cooperation promotes robust water storage and distribution mechanisms for expanding irrigation. IWT (1960) has led to the massive expansion of irrigation networks in India and Pakistan resulting in the agricultural revolution and food security. With above backdrop, the present paper attempts to explore role of water cooperation in reducing conflicts between India and Pakistan and to analyze the opportunities and challenges of water cooperation between India and Pakistan for ensuring water security in the Indus Basin. The paper explores the challenges of water scarcity and conflicts in the Indus Basin confining to India and Pakistan and provides new perspectives on water governance, management and cooperation between India and Pakistan and suggests policy options to address the challenges of meeting growing water demands focusing on water cooperation for improved livelihoods and well-being of population of two countries.

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