



# Interdependence Can Foster Stronger Ties between Pakistan and India

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## Abstract

The environmental challenges of both nations India and Pakistan specifically the concern of air and water resources, undergoes the complex interdependence between the geopolitical tensions and ecological systems. Although there existed the Indus Water Treaty since 1960 serving as the framework for sharing of water, population growth, contemporary challenges including climate change and the hydroelectric projects. Along with that shared air pollution problems, the seasonal smog caused due to the agricultural burn, putting serious threats to economics and health of both nations, still remained unresolved just because of mutual blame and political conflicts. The study is focusing on the potential of cooperation between both nations using the qualitative method of research.

**Keywords:** Co-operation; Interdependence; Shared resources; Indus water treaty; Mutual benefits; Climate change

## Introduction

### Historical insights

India and Pakistan are the two neighboring states with the mutual intertwined histories and geography, are usually historic territorial and political conflicts. But there is a mutual vulnerability of collaboration underlying the cross-border conflict i.e air pollution, water scarcity and the growing impacts of climate. This mistrust and geopolitical dispute have overshadowed various crucial opportunities of cooperation and welfare of the both states. Highlighting them will offer a superb way of building better relations between both states provides the new ground of friendship in these neighboring states. Two Nations can be bound by the Indus River system and Indo-genetic plains, as these are most important features stretching these two countries. If we look at the most sustainable co-operations between both nations we can find that the Indus Water Treaty is among most important examples of sustained collaboration between India and Pakistan, although there it was continued political hostility. But the present-day issues like population growth, water scarcity, climate change and management projects are finding out the how much resilient this treaty is.

Moreover the seasonal smog coming out of agricultural burns in Punjab cause the serious economic and health issue to both nations. Even the mutual nation of issues for both neighbors has not brought cooperation just because of the political conflicts. This paper is focusing on the shared ecological stressors creating tensions in both states especially in areas of air pollution and water scarcity, and find out the ways of cooperation and eradicate these tensions, the qualitative method is used which included the case study, document analysis, and the System literature review along with the effectiveness and quality of existing frameworks and treaties like IWT, also highlighting the barriers in co-operations between both states. Researcher has used the Qualitative approach to give a deep insight into the possibilities of cooperation between Pakistan and India, especially focusing on the factor of complex interdependence in terms of shared resources like water, air and energy. This method is taken to build a deep understanding of the social, political and ecological issue. Researcher has used the combined methods of document analysis and systematic literature review to ensure the deep examination of matter.

Researcher has used the secondary data which is collected through the Sources including International treaties, reports from different organizations (UNEP, World Bank), Government Policies, academic papers and media articles. The focus of researcher is on

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evaluating the functions of Indus Water Treaty in the proper management of resources, analyzing the present policies in terms of air and water management in both states. It involves the process of document selection which is based on the credibility, relevance and alignment with research objectives. All content is coded very systematically to find out gaps, recurring themes and patterns. Books, Peer-reviewed journals, case studies in fields of the international relations, south Asian research and environmental studies. Research databases including Google scholars, institutional achieves, Store are used to collect the scholarly articles. Studies emphasizing on the cross-border water and the air problems in the South Asian region. Research on the geopolitical areas of the ecological problems between Pakistan and India. Research done in last 20 years to maintain the factor of relevance. The literature review is then gathered to make the categories in the thematic areas I,e the climate change impacts, environmental diplomacy, air pollution management. All the insights were than synthesized to make connections among the ecological challenges and cooperation opportunities. All the data which was collected is than analyzed through the qualitative content analysis, which includes recognize the patterns and themes related to air and water resource issues. Comparing and contrasting the outcomes with the international and cross-border environmental governance examples to find out opportunities and gaps in India- Pakistan cooperation. Contextualizing the outcomes in the broader framework to know the hurdles and opportunities of the cooperation. By gathering the Systematic literature review and document analysis keeping it in the framework of qualitative approach, this research gives a solid foundation to build the understanding of the ecological issues shared by India and Pakistan. The outcomes says that no doubt there exists a geopolitical conflict between both nations but still opportunities exist for the collaboration I,e the climate change strategy, resource management, and joint research initiatives. The research says that ecological interdependence is surrounded with a lot of challenges but it has the potential of maintaining the regional stability and building of the trust. It requires the improvement of previous treaties and making of new policies on betterment of air quality and form the cross-border mechanism of environmental governance to highlight the mutual vulnerability. Research contributes to the knowledge of diplomacy of environment in the regions which are prone to conflicts and the potential of shared environmental tensions to act as a catalyst for cooperation and peace.

### **Ecological issues present a strategic and complex paradigm**

Although they are creating the existing tension but they also provide a great opportunity of collaboration. If we look at the

history then the examples like the Canada US Air Quality Agreements, Mekong River Commission demonstrates the way in which mutual ecological issues can bring the stability and trust in the region. So if we look at the case of Pakistan and India, Mutual struggle to manage the natural resources can bring the crucial benefits. Which may include improved energy security, improved quality of air, reduced stress of water and the better socioeconomic development. This Research has the potential to find out the intersection of the geopolitical dynamics and ecological challenges, aiming to look to the dimension of co-operations in the management of Trans boundary air and water resources. By looking at the previous frameworks I,e the IWT and recognize the issues in cooperative governance and give the deep insights into the way through which Pakistan and India can move forward and build up sustainable coexistence.

### **The trans-border collaboration and indus water treaty**

The trans-border collaboration between India and Pakistan over mutual resources, especially water is very diverse problem deepened by the ecological issues and the historical tensions. We cannot deny the fact that most renowned treaty Indus water treaty which is signed in 1960, which asked to regulate the sharing of water, better collaboration was not achieved due to environmental and geopolitical dispute. IWT allows three rivers in the east (Sutlej, Ravi and Beas) to be used by India and three in the west for Pakistan (Chenab, Indus, and Jhelum). A Permanent Commission of Indus is established to make sure the conflict resolution and dialogues. Despite a historical tension and many hard times, the treaty has survived till now. The hydroelectric projects of India on the river Chenab has also created the conflict regarding the reduction of water toward Pakistan. These projects violating the guidelines of treaty is creating the situation of mistrust among both nations. Erratic rainfalls, prolonged droughts and melting glaciers have deepened the issue of water scarcity, creating more challenges in the way of equal resource distribution. Limited resources in both states are bearing the weight of heavy population, increasing population is stressing the available water resources.

### **According to micro some of the key aspects of cooperation between two states includes**

The Indus Water Treaty forms a draft for the sharing of water, by pointing which river is for Pakistan and which one will provide water to India. Even in the presence of this treaty, contemporary conflict rose from the hydroelectric projects of India which affected the availability of downstream water in Pakistan [1]. Jayaram mentioned in his study that Climate change has created the deep-water scarcity, which has affected the agricultural section

in both countries and increased the competition for the resources. Cross-border ecological stressor, like the air pollution from the burn of agricultural remains, it further worsen the relations [1]. Analysts suggested that the climate change tackling strategies and attached basin management has the ability to bring the cooperation, stressing the need for the stability of political conditions and promote these types of initiatives. Trans-border collaboration can also expand the tourism and trade, promoting the economic as well as social development and eradicate the poverty ("Cross-Border Cooperation for Bilateral Trade, Travel, and Tourism", 2022). Although the potential of collaboration exists but the political and the historical context brings a clear tension. We need to shift towards cooperative governance and trust is crucial for making the management sustainable in terms of shared resources. Severely Polluted Indo-Gangetic Plain can be seen which has impacts on both the health and economy of country In Punjab, the agricultural burning can be seen as crucial factor contributing to the air pollution. In these circumstances both countries are blaming each other for this situation instead of looking for a solution, it create more complications in the way of their co-operation. The polluted air is causing the death of people, raising the mortality rate in both Pakistan and India. The seasonal spikes of air pollution, coming due to the burning of crops.

In these circumstances there is a crucial need of collaboration between both states to address the issue of air quality. The Geopolitical conflict between both nations has largely affected the way of collaboration between both countries in regards of air quality betterment. Although the air pollution has effected the cities of both nations Delhi and Lahore but still the political rivalries are only hurdles in the way of their collaboration. According to Abu Hurairah Abbas Stubble burning is carried out in both countries before the arrival of winter every year which leads to the polluted air but no one of them is interested in talking about it by sitting on the same cooperative ground, Another reason is that there is no enforcement of proper mechanism and alignment in the standards of emission. This kind of inconsistencies leads to the problem of air pollution [2]. The Prime Minister of Pakistan Main Muhammad Nawaz Sharif visited India in 2014 and attended the inaugural ceremony of Narendra Modi, he was of the view that he want to pick up the threads of Lahore Declaration, he was basically referring to the commitment made by both nation in 1999 to collaborate and get closer to each other under the agreement of SIMLA. At the same time, Pakistan has always been raising the issue of Kashmir at United Nations and General Assembly to ask the global community to fulfil its commitment concerning the United Nations Commission for the Pakistan and India (UNCIP) Resolutions of the 1948 and 1949. For Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Kashmir is the major problem at the international ground because it has found by the global organization as a dispute and the

nuclear flashpoint, and a source of threat to whole region particularly and to the whole globe generally. India is willing to improve the relations through trade, economy, cultural and the public contact. Pakistan stayed firm on it stance regarding Kashmir that it is the biggest controversy between India and Pakistan as re-enforcing the idea to settle the issue of Kashmir. The Shimla agreement, drawn in about 1972 mentions basic problems and causes behind the conflicts which have worsen the relations between both states now needs to be addressed and solved in very peaceful way. Despite of all these efforts we can observe that issues between both countries still exists without any improvement. Unfortunately the friendly relations between both countries failed to be established before 1972, and after that. No way helped to get out of this situation. In Nov, 2003, Pakistan and India agreed to the formal ceasefire on the international border, Actual Position on Ground and the Line of control in Jammu Kashmir. According to the former Director-General of the Military Operations. V.R. Raghavn, it was seen for the first time in history that both Pakistan and India were on same ground, it never happened before finally both nation were agree on this stance keeping in view their past agreement which say that they will use less weapons but were not able to practice it on reality grounds. Although it is hard to predict that what will happen in the future but only realistic and practicable solutions allow people to interact, build up the strong bilateral social as well as economic relations. As both countries have nuclear power which always creates a situation of threat for at least south Asia if not whole world. This is crucial need to build up the confidence and ensure strategic settlement between both nations keeping in view their nuclear weapons and the capacities of their missiles [3].

### Smog diplomacy

Smog Diplomacy is defined as "The Organization Leading the Charge to Address Pakistan's Air Pollution Crisis". We'll all these challenges exist but still smog diplomacy can be seen to get over the political and social issues and put the collaborative efforts to make the quality of air less hazardous and work on sustainable development projects and develop the good will among both states.

### Trans-boundary management

Ecological resources needs to have the co-operative management over the national border. Along with that the Indus water treaty works like a framework for contemporary peace and dispute resolution. Collaborated efforts can make the quality of air and water much better [4]. The Water Treaty which was signed in 1960 is a great source of water collaboration between Pakistan and India. The Treaty allows the usage of river Indus and all its tributes among the two nations. Even there is an ongoing tension but this

treaty survived for years. But the contemporary infrastructure projects and impacts of climate change have regional impacts. The conflict of territories over Kashmir also pose a threat to violate the treaty. Moreover, population growth has increased the water consumption which is again a challenge for collaboration.

### **Energy cooperation**

Energy collaboration is also a critical ground, especially concerned with Indus water basin. Pakistan has huge hydel power, there have always been an ongoing discussion about sharing it with the India. World Bank also directed Pakistan to give the surplus power with India and other neighbors. It would be a great example of friendly cooperation in terms of mutual ecological challenges [5].

### **Energy resources**

Potential for shared projects and energy trade. Pakistan and India are going through a severe shortage of energy and their speedy growing demand for electricity at domestic level has not met with available supply. Both states Pakistan and India are developing and heavily depends on the natural resources and fuels e.g. natural gas, coal and oil for their energy demands. Although there are various policy reforms and restructuring policies in the power sector but increasing consumption of energy and the decreasing reserves of natural gas and oil are still major the causes behind declining energy reserves. The analysis of the demand projections and power generation in Pakistan and India brings the fact that there is a possibility of energy collaboration and trade of power between both these countries. This trade and mutual sharing across the border is possible through the bilateral mode, wheeling mode or the pool-based mode. Along with that we can see some newer initiative that can be taken in order to build up the regional and bilateral energy collaborations [5].

The increasing demands of energy in Pakistan, Iran and India the gas pipeline is expected to have special place. The countries with low energy I,e china, Pakistan and India struggling to acquire the pipeline for gas in various parts of the globe. It has led them to two important developments: They are struggling to compete each other, along with that they can also confront US and other western countries by taking the control of all energy bases. Here, Pakistan is struggling to get maximum leverages. A country which was not willing to establish the trade relations with India , is now craving to earn the benefit of billions of dollars by annual royalties and transit fees through a gas pipeline running from the south Paris of Iran to India. Pakistan is agree to provide the subsidy on gas and become a strong for-ex earner [6]. Both these states have mutual ecological issues I,e drought, flood , climate change and smog. Collaboration in solving all these problems can help them to improve the bilateral relations. For example: The combine struggle

in climate adaptation strategy and the disaster management can bring benefits. The cross border ecological issues I,e hydroelectric projects and agricultural burning have created tension but also come up the way of collaboration.

### **Coordinated disaster management (floods, droughts)**

Moreover Pakistan and India are the man-made as well as natural disasters. Both states are going through situation where they have the risk of many disasters which includes terrorism, flood, drought and earthquake, at the same time they have to manage with their limited resources [7].

### **Futuristic insights**

In this section researcher has drawn the crucial findings which will be very helpful in future of research, making the categories of air quality management, water cooperation and trans-border co-operation opportunities.

### **Water cooperation**

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) is serving as a framework and basic foundation for the sharing of water resources among India and Pakistan. But modern challenges have brought hurdles in its effectiveness. This treaty is unable to deal with the contemporary problems including environmental stability and the climate adaption. Unavailability of information and data led to the mistrust and efficient management of water Cross-border air pollution is the major contemporary issue, especially in Indo- Gangetic Plain, Region in which the cities like Delhi and Lahore continuously go through the low quality and poisonous air. Burning is taken as a low cost way of making the fields clear in Punjab of both countries which is the major source of smog and air pollution. The growing industrial and urban growth in crucial in spreading the air pollution of both states, Both India and Pakistan blame each other and held each other responsible for the issue, which create hurdles in their way of collaboration. The poisonous air is causing crucial health issues, resulting in high mortality rate caused by the cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. Economic expenditure includes the health-care cost, lost productivity and the reduced agriculture productivity because of low air quality. This issue needs to be addressed.

### **Barriers to cooperation**

The Historical and Geopolitical disputes prevent both countries to cooperate and find a way out of air pollution. The enforcement mechanism and different emission standards leads to misalignment in the creation of policy opportunities for co-operation includes implementing the aligned policies and the emission standards of

regions can help in combating the air pollution. Smog diplomacy is providing a framework for the negotiation, focuses on the mutual ecological issue rather than the historical, political conflicts. Despite the political conflicts dominate the diplomatic relationship, number of opportunities for cooperation exist in the management of mutual ecological resources. Pakistan holds high potential hydro power, if we share it with India then it will reduce the cost of energy for both nations. World Bank has also directed Pakistan to share these energy resources. Improving the trans-border Eco-tourism and trade can improve economic and social conditions while ensuring the ecological stability. Combine efforts are required for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage sites. Integrated management can be helpful in reducing conflicts and improving the efficiency of water use. Moreover the integrated practices for the climate resilience can be helpful, it can benefit both nations.

## Conclusion

The ecological issues faced by India and Pakistan, which includes the air pollution and water scarcity provides both opportunities and obstacles for cooperation. Although IWT will be an important achievement. The environmental challenges faced by Pakistan and India, including water scarcity and air pollution, offer both obstacles and opportunities for collaboration. While the IWT remains a significant achievement, its limitations highlight the need for revisions to address contemporary challenges. Similarly, air quality management requires innovative, cooperative approaches to mitigate public health crises. Building trust between the two nations is paramount. Initiatives like joint research, integrated basin management, and "smog diplomacy" can serve as starting points. Addressing shared environmental issues not only has the potential to improve health and economic outcomes but also to foster long-term regional stability. The success of such efforts depends on transcending political rivalries and adopting a shared vision for sustainable development.

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