

ELEMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CO-OPERATION IN INDIA PAKISTAN RELATIONS: AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract

The environment and the availability of resources to sustain it are central to the concept of a state. If one looks back to history, it seems like a united India was also a result of these. As partition took place, too many issues rose and became points of conflict. Of these issues, border settlement, population transfer with their assets, amalgamation of local princely states, etc., are major issues, but environmental issues are the most prominent. As environmental concerns are simultaneously related to the livelihood and well-being of people, these environmental issues have been ignored since partition and can be a cause of war or conflict between two nations, like the Bolivian water war, etc. This paper aims to highlight the experiences and opportunities for environmental cooperation in the peace process between India and Pakistan. In this order, this paper examines the elements of environmental cooperation in India-Pakistan relations. This segment of research is important to some cores as, first, it shares common interests in sustainability and security between two nations; second, it attempts to mitigate the environmental stress between the two nations; and third, it suggests the path for peace and stability in the region along with the prosperity of the citizens of the nations.

Keywords: Environmental Co operation, India- Pakistan Relations, Peace process

INTRODUCTION

Recent debates on the impact of climate change have elevated environmental security to the pinnacle of many international systems' agendas. Conferences, symposiums, and talks are concerned with topics like water war, scarcity, and social and economic disorder, etc., due to non-traditional threats like immigration of people due to disasters. The United Nations Environmental Program (U.N.E.P.) published a report titled "Making Peace with Nature", which was quoted as "A Report How to End the World's Suicidal War on Nature" by UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres. Linking the environment to conflict is not a novel phenomenon, but rather an age-old practice. Each and every activity in a human life is attached and influenced. In recent years, as the environment has been recognised as a cause of every system and subsystem of international order, a vast range of literature has come to light advocating their linkage, implication, effect, etc. In addition, a number of governmental and non-governmental organisations have started to exercise the environment as a topic as a gateway to peace and confidence-building measures. Their focus is to offer the management of the environment and various related resources. Views on the Agenda to tackle all the possible direct or indirect causes of conflict and disturbance related to it. The idea of cooperation is that when people or groups of people work jointly on common problems, their shared interests and needs will come out to justify their cooperation more rationally than conflict.

RELATION BETWEEN ENVIRONMENT AND PEACE

The linkage between the environment and peace is marked as sophisticated by a number of intellectuals as it does not have an actual definition and limit of scope. However, this co-relationship is oversimplified because everything that leads to peace must converge with a few environmental points. It is not an exception to study both the terms together for the whole peace process, as environmental diplomacy, environmental conflicts, and many other dimensions of this area are interconnected. Studying the environment and peace as an interdisciplinary method is not only a theoretical issue but also a scientific approach for various objectives. Conjoining these terms gives a holistic approach that covers a wide range of aspects. A vast number of issues have been covered in it, like ecosystems, various kinds of pollution, biodiversity, conservation, human security with its many dimensions, resource management, security, and other related issues to conflict, security, and peace.

For the conceptual framework, environment and peace are academic as well as brown bread theory in many contexts to various parts of the international strategic spectrum. It intervenes in a wide range of situations as a discourse, from individuals to governments. For the India-Pakistan issue, there is a vast chronology to justify the relevance of the study. Many attempts have been made, which resulted in more negatives than positives. The conflict between the two nations is world-known on various issues on which resources like land (Kashmir, Rann of Kutch etc.), water (Indus and other rivers), humans and some others are also important.

ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION AND PEACE PROCESS

Traditionally, the scarcity literature has primarily been concerned with overpopulation and the associated overuse of renewable natural resources. Environmental issues like water scarcity, land degradation, pollution, or unnecessary exploitation of natural resources are often proven as causes of violent conflict. The causes get centre stage for interstate relations. Resource sharing and its exploitation are unfair among the various segments of society, which accelerates intergroup conflict. The activities of this discourse then include identifying and addressing environmental issues as actual causes of conflict as the bottom of the political agenda. Environmental issues may provide a better stage for dialogue and cooperation, even between conflicting parties. In such cases, the goal is to use these issues, such as trans-boundary, water scarcity, pollution, land degradation, and so on, to create a space for people to meet and discuss cooperation for joint solutions. Although the environment is not a direct cause of conflict itself, it is a means to provide a platform for a dialogue process with a broad aim. It can serve as a peace-building measure by providing a stage for step-by-step track VII diplomacy for open and free ideas. It may also provide possible solutions to conflict with peaceful and non-violent methods. As it engages the parties to achieve a common interest without sacrificing their national objectives. One more role may be to spread awareness among citizens of both parties about the problems and may also present the path to electing a better government or managing authority for these vital issues.

ELEMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION AND INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

The relations between two individuals, nations, or groups depend upon the understandings and behaviours between them. However, the pitch was queered by the fact that the emergency of the two most popular states, i. e., India and Pakistan, was marred by strife. The relations between India

and Pakistan are characterised by periodic ups and downs, hot and cold diplomacy, and intermitted breakdowns. From the incident of partition emerged hate, confusion, and rivalry between the two nations. As leaders thought, the emergence of Pakistan would solve the problem. But they were disappointed. The problem became more critical day by day and a new conflict came into existence as life became more difficult in this sub-continent. This animosity has its roots in religion and history and is epitomised by the long-running conflicts.

As Richard Mettew opines, "Pushing into higher and higher levels of vulnerability, it may be the people of South Asia who will have the initiative and need to rethink social practices, values, institutes, and beliefs in the context of global environmental change and their local community, there by developing new environmentally sustainable approaches to political and economic life.ⁱ Formalized paraphrase Environmental fallout is an obvious result of the quest for quick economic growth for both nations. Massive population densities, deteriorating environments, the fragmentation of habitats, huge burdens on infrastructure, limited capacities to deal with environmental issues.ⁱⁱ

All of these problems exist in both countries, making it impossible for environmental discussions to play an important role. Some of the significant common environmental concerns between the two countries are as follows:

- **Saving Critical Habitats:** Saving Critical Habitats recognised the importance of critical ecosystems and has given new policy directions regarding ecosystem conservation in the form of critical habitats. The Indus dolphin and the great Indian bustard have both been spotted. The Great Indian Bustard (GIB) is one of the rarest, critically endangered and scheduled species in Scheduled I of the Protection of the Environment Act, 1972. It is found commonly in the Thar Desert (especially around Desert National Park in Rajasthan, India), the Rann of Kutch, and Punjab (Sindh) between India and Pakistan. The count of GIB is steadily approaching stable, which was less than 200ⁱⁱⁱ in June 2013 at the launching of Project Great Indian Bustard by the then Government of Rajasthan. As per the blog of the Rural India Support Trust, the number of GIB is still less than 200 ^{iv}. The main concerns about GIB are the high voltage electric power lines that result in electric shock burns during crashes with these lines and its poaching for meat as its size is about double that of peacock. Like GIB, functionally blind and adapted to living in muddy rivers, the Indus River Dolphin (IRD) is one of the five species of river dolphins that exist in the world. IRD is also commonly found in the lower part of the Indus River and its tributaries like the Beas. IRD is in the category of endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List. According to WWF, there are 1816^v in number. The main threats to the IRD are overfishing and unsustainable fishing, infrastructure development near or on rivers, lower water quality due to industry wastes and other wastes, etc. The Punjab government has taken the initiative to protect dolphins and their habitat. Since its discovery, research has been conducted by Punjab's Department of Forests and Wildlife Preservation in partnership with WWF-India on the current distribution, habitat use, and population abundance of the mammal.^{vi}
- **Trans-boundary Wetlands:** A wetland is a location where water covers the soil or is present at or near the soil's surface for the entire year or for a changing period of time

throughout the year. This includes all lakes and rivers, groundwater aquifers, swamps, marshes, wet grasslands, peat lands, oases, estuaries, deltas, mangroves, coastal areas, coral reefs, and all human-made sites such as ponds, paddy fields, and reservoirs. According to the 1909 Empirical Gazetteer, the Kutch Dispute (Sir Crick area is the Actual Internal Sea, according to the 1909 Empirical Gazetteer). Experts believe that flowing Indus and other rivers emptied into the Arabian Sea via water channels or creeks in this area, forming the Rann of Kutch as an arm of the Arabian Sea. It covers approximately 30,000 square kilometers of land and includes The Great Rann of Kachch. The Little Rann of Kachch and Banni grassland^{vii}. The current delta adjacent to the Rann covers approximately 41,440 km² near the Pakistani border and is approximately 210 kilometers across where it meets the sea.^{viii} It has played an important role throughout history, with evidence dating from the Jurassic period to the Harappa civilization; it is unique, with a wetland of hybrid environment, a single home of the Indian wild horse, and a heaven for various migratory birds.

- **Ecologically sensitive areas and protected areas:** Ecologically sensitive areas are generally defined as areas that have been declared ecologically sensitive or have been designated as such by international or government authorities. Siachen Glacier is one of them. It is the longest [glacier](#) located in the eastern [Karakoram](#) Range in the [Himalaya](#) Mountains and the [second-longest in the world's non-polar areas](#). Although it is still not declared as an ecological sensitive area, it lies in seismic zone IV and is situated parallel to the conjunction of the Indian plate and the Tibetan plate. Another view is that it is parallel to the Karakorum range, which makes it more sensitive. A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space that is recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.^{ix} In Pakistan, a system of "protected areas" for endangered species, habitats, ecosystems, archaeological sites, monuments, buildings, and other cultural heritage sites. Pakistan is also a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Pakistan has also signed the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. Pakistan has 14 national parks, 72 wildlife sanctuaries, 66 game reserves, 19 Ramsar Protected Sites, 9 marine and littoral protected areas, and 1 biosphere reserve.^x
- **Water bodies:** According to the agreement between the two countries in December 1947, Pakistan's government agreed to pay for the water of Ravi and Satluj rivers but disagreed on others. So India cut the supply of water to West Punjab. In the beginning, the problem was related to the Indus and its tributary rivers. But as years passed, it turned to the Farakka Dam on the Ganga River (330 MW project in India), the Krishna Ganga Project on the Chenab river (450 MW), and the Balgihar Project of Pakistan in POK (990 MW). Some other projects Kalabagh, on the Indus River in Punjab's Minyawala district, has a projected capacity of 3600MW. The Vunji Dam is located in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltic Sector and is supported by China. capacity of 7000 MW. Daymar Basha Dam, which is situated in POK, has a projected capacity of 3360MW in Pakistan. The Indus is included in the five most vulnerable hotspots for future war in a study^{xi}. All of these bodies of water have symbolic

meanings, but they can also serve as a bridge between countries for mutual development, water security, and energy security. There is a lack of mutual agreement for the distribution of resources and power sources scattered between the two of them.

- **Crop Residue:** Transboundary pollution levels are influenced by Indian and Pakistani contributions from crop residue burning. Remote sensing and atmospheric transport analyses suggest that pollution from India and Pakistan's Punjab agricultural regions contributes to air pollution impacts within each country, as well as across the border, but the levels vary by season. In the pre-monsoon burning season (April to May), fire activity is observed in both India and Pakistan's Punjab agricultural regions. The October–November post-monsoon burning mostly occurs in India's Punjab State. However, atmospheric transport patterns show that pollution from post-monsoon agricultural fires flows primarily to the southeast, where it can impact air pollution in other regions in India but generally does not cross the border to Pakistan. However, Pakistan's fire activity was consistently lower during the post-monsoon burning season. If burning were to increase in Pakistan during the post-monsoon season, it could have implications for trans-boundary pollution transport as well.

APPRAISAL

There is a larger issue at stake here: transboundary environmental issues should be encircled as a chance for improved cooperation for the health and well-being of the population, rather than as a cause of conflict in this region. As a result of the ongoing stress on resource quantity and quality caused by climate change, population growth, and ageing infrastructure, India and Pakistan could better coordinate and share information in order to increase the settlement of sustainable resource management strategies for both.

At the regional level, the Convention on the Protection and Use of Trans-boundary Watercourses and International Lakes sets out important principles and rules that provide a comprehensive basis for the development of new agreements. At the international level, the Ramsar Convention, to which India and Pakistan are both parties, encourages collaboration over trans-boundary wetlands. Other initiatives that could promote international water cooperation include Peace Parks, the Global Trans-boundary Protected Area Network, and other high-level platforms for water cooperation. On GIB, the Supreme Court of India ordered to emphasise and recommend swift on wind and solar power as the region of 300 days of sunlight shows the torch to these critical habitats' survival. IRD, the government of Punjab, India, took the initiative, which is a mile stone. A peaceful resolution of the conflict in Siachen is possible and indeed necessary to protect the fragile and unique Siachen ecosystem, which, like all ecosystems, does not recognise national borders. In terms of protecting the Siachen, India and Pakistan have several options, none of which are better suited to the long-term management of an ecosystem that has recently recovered from military conflict. Burning crop residue has been declared an illegal act and subject to a court fine by various Indian state governments, which minimises these cases.

OPPORTUNITIES

A nation state alone is not capable of coping with environmental problems like air pollution, cross-border issues of river water, etc. In this reference, some suggestions are as follows:

- For the critical habitat saving of GIB and IRD, a joint programme between two countries should be created by either nation or by any international forum.
- There are opportunities to negotiate regional agreements within the framework of the Ramsar Convention: The Sir Creek border dispute between India and Pakistan occurs in close proximity to Ramsar sites in the coastal mangrove region of South Asia.
- A plan should be developed by both countries on mutual collaboration to manage Siachen Peace Park. It would be administered by both nations, which would offer more scientific bases for withdrawing the armed forces and other resources engaged in the security of this region.
- Crop residue can be treated and turned into compost to be used as manure in the infertile border area, which would be cost effective.
- Issues can be shortened by peace efforts to create a "Peace Zone" in South Asia under the leadership of SARRC.

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