

***Rivers Divided-Indus Basin Waters in the Making of India and Pakistan.* Haines, Daniel. Oxford University Press, 2016, 264.**

Mahwish Hafeez\*

“Rivers Divided-Indus Basin Waters in the Making of India and Pakistan” by Daniel Haines is an historic account of water politics in South Asia. Tracing the history of Indus basin, the writer feels that despite its shortcomings, the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) has become a symbol of cooperation between the two rival states. This is particularly true as the treaty has survived the wars between India and Pakistan.

According to the author, nationality and territory are deeply connected in modern South Asia thinking as is evident by the role played by the political organisations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century namely the Indian National Congress, All India Muslim League and All India Hindu Mahasabha. For the Congress, nationalism was marked in metaphors only. The twentieth century political discourse deified the figure of *Bharat Mata* (Mother India) as personification of the nation. The Hindu ideologues also put forth a territorialised vision of Hindu-ness. This was evident from the title page of a pamphlet *Hindutva* written by Vinayak Damodar Savarkr. Muslims had a more diverse vision of territory as many of Muslim leaders worked for the Congress. During the late 1930s, Muslim leaders particularly Jinnah insisted that India was not a nation but a geographical space where two nations, Hindus and Muslims, lived. The writer then goes on to describe the events of the partition and mass dislocation of the people. He also describes in detail the accession of princely states particularly the state of Kashmir, which never allowed the boundary between the two countries to settle down.

The author then goes on to explain the origins of Indo-Pakistan water dispute that erupted soon after the partition. Based on their geographic locations, both countries adopted rival logics to claim their right on water. India, being an upper riparian country put forth the ideology of “absolute

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\* *The book reviewer is Research Fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.*

sovereignty” (p.35). India claimed that as an upper riparian country power, it entirely owned the water that flowed within its borders and could do as it wished with water. Pakistan, on the other hand, advocated the principle of “territorial integrity” (p.35), which meant that a downstream state has the right to continue receiving water, which it has been previously receiving for irrigation, hydropower, industry or human drinking. The author argues that the water dispute between India and Pakistan was not primarily about water. It was more about the territories that the two countries governed and how those territories could be developed economically. In this regard, the ability to control the flow of water out of country or into a country became a symbolism of strength. This was particularly important in the case of Pakistan, which faced numerous other problems: political, linguistic, socio-economic and ethnic. With Pakistan threatening to use force, if water was denied to it, ultimately World Bank was involved.

The author then moves on to explain the relation between Kashmir and the water disputes. The Indus, Chenab and Jhelum flow from Kashmir and the recent construction of dams on these rivers has once again brought back the water dispute between the two countries to the forefront. According to the author, the Indian and Pakistani approaches to this dispute showed a fraught relationship between “sovereignty, territory and belonging.” (p.61) According to the writer, in the field of water development, Pakistan exercised more sovereignty during 1950s and 1960s, compared to India as by building Mangla Dam, Pakistan was able to integrate the part of Kashmir in its water and energy supply network. India, on the other hand, felt that its development plans in Kashmir were severely hampered by the IWT. Kashmiris have been raising their voice in this regard and in 2003, the Jammu and Kashmir assembly passed a resolution demanding renegotiation of the treaty.

In the next chapter, the author moves from Kashmir to the plains of Punjab. Dating back to 1880s, the canal colonies were established in East Punjab to irrigate mostly unused land. While highlighting the fraught nature of border making by the colonial power in many parts of the world, the author feels that the partition of Punjab is a perfect example in the South Asian context.

On the IWT, the author argues that signing this particular treaty was beneficial for both India and Pakistan but it lacked imperatives for

cooperation. It was essentially apolitical solution and not primarily based on technical negotiations. Though it paved the way for both India and Pakistan to carry out their development work during 1960s and 70s, the treaty failed to break the deadlock between the two countries as water dispute keeps on emerging frequently.

The writer also discusses in detail, the water dispute between India and Bangladesh. Soon after Bangladesh's creation, the relations between India and Bangladesh were warm. It was 1975 when the Indian engineers completed the Farakka Barrage and feeder canal. A short-term agreement for a trial operation of the barrage was signed between the two countries. The opposition parties in both countries were against this agreement and the author believes that it was one of the reasons why Mujib-ur-Rahman was killed by his own army. Following Mujib's assassination, India unilaterally diverted the waters. It was in December 1996 that the two countries finally signed a water treaty, which was limited in scope, nature and did not take into account new developments in international law of watercourses or promote sustainable development. The writer also argues that the success of the IWT could not be applied in the case of India and Bangladesh as the success of treaty apply specifically to the Indus Basin itself. It is a fact that the treaty has survived two wars between India and Pakistan but that does not make it a model for any other water dispute resolution.

In the concluding chapter, the author once again reiterates that territoriality and sovereignty were central to water politics in the basin as controlling water flows within national territory was important for state sovereignty. He also argues that dispute and treaty occupied a very particular historic moment. On basis of these observations, the writer summarises that water was essential to both internal and external sovereignty in South Asia. In the case of the Indus River, the state territoriality is still the framework for water resources development. India's Kishanganga and Baghliar dam projects have been a matter of grave concern for Pakistan. Growing power deficit in Pakistan and north-western India will lead to more tension over water. The author recommends that the possible changes in the economic structure of the basin like a large scale shift away from water intensive agriculture should open up scope for both the countries to reduce their dependence on Indus water. He also suggests

importing virtual water embedded in food grown elsewhere is another possibility.

This book gives a deep insight into water politics of the South Asian region. Tracing the history of dispute helps in understanding the current set of tensions between India and Pakistan. The writer has rightly pointed out that in future, more problems related to water are likely to emerge. Since the IWT is considered to be one of the strongest Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), it is imperative that both India and Pakistan resolve their new emerging disputes amicably under the treaty mechanism. Statements by Modi government of revoking the treaty would not serve anyone's purpose. One can conclude by saying that this book is a good addition in the existing research on the Indus Basin. It is a must read for those who are seeking a better understanding of water dispute between India and Pakistan.