

Case Study of Water Conflict between India and China

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Background

Tibet is located in western China, bordered by India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar to the north and East Turkistan to the south.. Tibet is the highest and largest plateau on Earth its average altitude is approximately 3,350 meters and is home to many rivers such as Yellow, Yangtze, Mekong, Brahmaputra, Salween etc. India is afraid that, China will intercept even divert the water flow to its north and east region.

WHY INDIA IS WORRIED?

- One of India's longest rivers Brahmaputra, originates from, Yarlung Tsangpo Tibetan plateau
- Large amount of Indian population depends heavily on Brahmaputra for agricultural, industrial and potable needs
- Denial of hydrogeological data by China during high floods
- China's building of multiple dams may give them more leverage at a later stage



Fig 2: A lady collecting water after walking long distances through barren land in north India



Fig 1: Pictorial representation of Tibetan plateau and the rivers originating there

SOLUTIONS

- Creating rules and regulations after mutual discussions
- Harvesting rainwater
- Raising awareness among public on the importance of water preservation and controlled use
- Water reuse and reclamation
- Crop selection based on climatic conditions

WHY CHINA IS WORRIED?

- Desertification land accounts for a quarter of China's land area
- Tibet region is the lifeblood of China's water resources and is related to the country's fundamental interests
- Water resources per capita are extremely scarce, and large, medium and small cities and rural areas are generally short of water
- To provide the world's largest population with sufficient water and energy, water is required more than ever



Fig 3: Dry land in the severely water-deficient area of the Loess Plateau in Northwest China

Conclusion

When two parties are thinking at the problem on their own perspectives, they are forgetting the long road ahead. Tibetan plateau is mainly made of glaciers, according to some researchers by 2035 the whole glacier will be turned completely into water if the glaciers melt at current rate in relation to the global warming. All conflicts based on ownership and transport of water from Tibet will be pointless in a decade. Hence, the solution must focus the bigger picture, by thinking and researching on water conservation, efficient use of rainwater, desalination and drip irrigation etc.

Reference and Further Information →

