



EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATION

DATE: 06.05.2025

TOPIC: INDIA PAKISTHAN TREATY

The messaging from putting the IWT in 'abeyance'

1. Background of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

- The **Indus Waters Treaty (1960)** is a water-sharing agreement between **India and Pakistan**, brokered by the **World Bank**.
- It governs the use of the waters of the **Indus River system**, allocating eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) to India and western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) largely to Pakistan.
- Despite multiple wars and hostilities between the two countries, the treaty has been regarded as a **successful and resilient framework**.

2. India's Unprecedented Move: Placing the Treaty in "Abeyance"

- Following the **April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack**, India placed the implementation of the IWT in "**abeyance**", citing **Pakistan's continued support for cross-border terrorism**.
- The term "abeyance" implies a temporary suspension or holding of obligations, but **this move is unprecedented in the context of IWT**.

3. Legal Concerns and Implications

- The term "**abeyance**" is **not legally recognized** under the IWT or the **Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT)**.
- Though India is not a signatory to the VCLT, **customary international law discourages unilateral suspension or withdrawal from treaties**.
- **Article XII (3) and (4)** of the IWT clearly prohibit **unilateral modification or suspension** of the treaty's provisions.
- India's action may **violate international norms**, opening space for Pakistan to initiate legal or arbitration proceedings under global dispute mechanisms.

4. Strategic and Political Dimensions

- The move is widely seen as a **strategic signal** to pressurize Pakistan and **deter state-sponsored terrorism**.
- By placing the treaty in abeyance, India could halt:



- The **sharing of hydrological data**, especially crucial during monsoon or flood seasons.
- **Approval for new infrastructure projects** on western rivers that require Pakistan's consent under the treaty.
- It may also allow India to **expedite domestic projects** on western rivers (like Chenab and Jhelum) without waiting for Pakistani objections or neutral expert clearance.

5. Domestic Policy Boost and Infrastructure Implications

- India may use this situation to **fast-track construction of dams and hydroelectric projects** for better water utilization.
- Projects like **Ratle and Kishanganga** on western rivers, which have faced resistance and delay due to treaty obligations, may now see faster clearance.
- Enhancing control over the Indus system aligns with India's **national water security strategy**.

6. Potential Risks and Fallout

- **Legal backlash:** Pakistan may seek arbitration via the **World Bank or the International Court of Justice**.
- **Environmental concerns:** Rapid infrastructure development in the **Indus Basin**, which is seismically sensitive and ecologically rich, could harm:
 - **Biodiversity hotspots.**
 - **Indigenous communities and agrarian economies** downstream.
 - **Hydrological balance** of the entire basin system.
- It may further **intensify regional tensions**, especially if perceived as a coercive tactic rather than a legitimate security response.

7. Long-Term Diplomatic and Strategic Considerations

- The decision must be **part of a broader geopolitical and security framework** and not just a retaliatory measure.
- **Abeyance should not replace comprehensive diplomacy**—India needs to balance:
 - Strategic pressure on Pakistan.
 - Long-term adherence to international law.
 - Environmental and humanitarian responsibilities.



- A clear **exit strategy and communication with international stakeholders** (especially the World Bank) is essential to prevent reputational damage.

8. Conclusion and Way Forward

- While the suspension signals India's strong stand against terrorism, **lasting peace and legal strength require institutional processes**.
- India must:
 - Engage in **robust diplomatic outreach**.
 - Pursue **counter-terrorism strategies** alongside legal compliance.
 - Ensure that **domestic river projects** are environmentally sustainable.
- The current situation presents an opportunity to **reform water-sharing mechanisms**, but with **constitutional morality, international law, and ecological stewardship** at the core.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-messaging-from-putting-the-iwt-in-abeyance/article69541448.ece>