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Krishna River Water and Rising Tensions

Introduction

Water is one of the major key issues in South Asia today, whether it is accessing clean water or having water for a way of life. For India, water is the soul of the country; not only does it give life, it is used for transportation, it is used for cleaning and cooking, but it also is important politically. So, when one of the states in India that has access to one of the major river basins is supposedly changing numbers about how much is supplied to another state, tensions are sure to rise. That is recently the case with Andhra Pradesh releasing Krishna river water to a Telangana dam.

In this paper, I will briefly cover the Andhra Pradesh – Telangana water issue and make connections with the course material. I will also look at scholarly articles that relate to this water issue, and link them to course materials. I will look at why the missing water is an important issue for Indians to be concerned about.

Current Event Overview

In a recent article from *The Indian Express*, Sreenivas Jamyala writes about water missing in transit between the Srisailem dam and the Nagarjuna Sagar dam. The Krishna River Management Board and the Telangana government ordered inquiries into missing Krishna river water. Andhra Pradesh claims to have released water from their Srisailem dam to Telangana's

Nagrjuna Sagar dam. However, almost 45 thousand million cubic feet of water is missing, reported by the Telangana Irrigation department. Telangana officials are accusing Andhra Pradesh of changing figures of the water released while using that water for one of their projects.

Geographic Aspects and Link to Course Materials

Water is an important resource for basic survival for everyone. While India has many rivers, every state does not have equal access to clean water. When everyone does not have access to water, this can cause disputes, in the case of India, the disputes are at a political level, above an individual level. After India gained independence, dams were built, this led to less water runoff, and in turn, more usable water is left available. Water treaties were then put in place, so that states that have direct access to water must give excess water to other states that may not have direct access to a river basin. However, the state that has the water only gives up water after they have obtained an amount that can sustain them; so, the receiving state is not necessarily guaranteed a suitable amount from the giving state. This shows that the state in control of the water is in control of others and their lives.

Scholarly Journal Articles' Overview and Link to Current Events

In the paper, *Detecting the long-term impacts from climate variability and increasing water consumption on runoff in the Krishna river basin (India)*, the authors discuss various factors such as dams and climate change, and the effects they have on the Krishna river basin. Since the dams have been built, river runoff and discharges have decreased. However, irrigation and hydropower have also increased resulting in an increase in consumption of the water. (Bouwer 2006, 711)

In the paper, *Beyond water, beyond boundaries: spaces of water management in the Krishna river basin, South India*, the authors talk about the Krishna river basin and how managing the water from it makes the tensions rise in and above state political levels. The demand for freshwater in Andhra Pradesh is extremely high, especially because of projects that need water. This high need of water leads to major interstate disagreements that contribute in inter- and intra-state political struggles (Venot 2011, 162). States such as the Andhra Pradesh, engage in massive developments in hydraulic infrastructure to claim water resources (Venot 2011, 162).

In the paper *Reconfiguration and closure of river basins in south India: trajectory of the lower Krishna basin*, the authors discuss the lower Krishna river basin and what is happening with it regarding the states that have the Krishna river flow through. Because of water control in the upper Krishna river basin, inflow of water into the lower basin has decreased in recent years (Venot 2008, 443). States that have the Krishna river flow through them, like Andhra Pradesh, are responsible for redistributing this water, however, they continue to expand their agricultural and irrigation sectors (Venot 2008, 447-448).

Increasing the freshwater retention of the Krishna river basin would benefit everyone who needs the water. However, with the increase of the retention in the upper river basin, the lower river basin does not get a higher inflow. States that have direct access to this water get to use it first, as much as they need or even want. Then they can give “remaining” water to other states that do not have this same access. Even with rising tensions between states, the states that have access to the Krishna river basins have increased irrigation and hydropower projects, increasing the usage of water, while leaving less freshwater for other states.

Roshni Chakraborty and Ismail Serageldin discuss how the sharing water policies in India, and to its neighboring countries causes tensions to rise in their paper, *Sharing of River Waters among India and its Neighbors in the 21st century: War or Peace?* They say that, “water conflicts are caused due to the lack of availability of freshwater which is highly dependent on unequal access and population” (Chakraborty 2004, 201). India has also been labeled as water scarce since the country has not been able to derive sustainable water management results (Chakraborty 2004, 201). Since freshwater is hard to come by, and India cannot find a sustainable way to maintain the freshwater they have, it is not surprising that tensions will rise between two states in India.

A state that has direct access to freshwater, such as Andhra Pradesh has a control over the water and decides when and how much to share with states such as Telangana, a state that does not have direct access to freshwater. Telangana is dependent on Andhra Pradesh for freshwater, however, when the water comes up short of the reported amount, for whatever reason, tensions are sure to rise between the two states.

Conclusion

Water is an important resource in India, and water treaties have been put in place to ensure an access to freshwater. However, with unclear definitions, states can determine when and how much water to share with other states, especially after using an abundance of water for a project. Telangana was received less water than reported by Andhra Pradesh, currently it is not known why so much water is missing, however it could be for a hydropower project Andhra Pradesh is working on. Whatever the reason is, the tensions between the two states are growing because of missing water.

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