

PSIR & GS-2

DAILY BRIEF

ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

Briefs, scans the best academic platforms, national newspapers & leading think tanks to pick the most relevant articles & research. It converts them into crisp, high-impact points you can directly use in your mains answers.



PSIR OPTIONAL BY
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| ForumIAS |

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Mecca accord and India's energy security : Gateway House

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The mountains have sounded a warning, we ignore it at our peril: IE

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The untold cold war story of the Indus treaty : Sri Lanka Guardian

Mecca accord and India's energy security



Context Saudi Arabia, Turkey & Pakistan have signed a joint defence agreement, and India should judge it by Riyadh needs for a growing Indian oil market it cannot afford to lose.

Facts



India imports : 4mb/d and is only large oil market projected to cross 10mb/d of imports in 20 years.



Oil peaked at \$147 barrel (over \$200 today) against about \$90 now : despite worst gulf disruption since WWII.



Oil consumption in European countries and Japan fallen consistently over four decades ; China's demand growth is slowing.

Analytical Crux

The understood way to read Mecca pact is through Pakistan i.e. a new alliance and new threat. But it can be viewed through the oil market instead. When the world is well supplied with oil, the scarce thing is no longer the barrel but the buyer, and India is the only large buyer still growing. That inverts the old logic of the Gulf. Riyadh now needs Indian demand more than India needs any supplier, so it will not put that market at risk to help a client state. Therefore, a security agreement between three states does not by itself rearrange a region and the pact cannot be called an Islamic NATO.

Verbatim Quotes

"Economics often trumps strategy and instead of supplier-security, it is demand-security that will be a major concern."

—Amit Bhandari

The mountains have sounded a warning, we ignore it at our peril

The mountains have sounded a warning, we ignore it at our peril

A S A frequent visitor to the Himalayan region in India, Nepal and Bhutan over four decades, I have witnessed the relentless spoliation of this majestic but fragile mountain zone. The eternal is becoming episodic as the snows covering the high peaks melt at an accelerated pace from global warming, exacerbated by indiscriminate ecological degradation. Despite persistent and alarming warning signs, human greed and cupidity have continued to provoke the fury of the mountains, visiting death and destruction on communities residing in their valleys and along river banks.

Nepal is the latest victim of catastrophic flash floods, sweeping down from mountains just across the border with Tibet, caused by what is technically termed a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF). A mountain river upstream may be blocked by a portion of a glacier breaking away or by an avalanche, thereby forming a lake. When the loose banks of this lake burst under pressure, then a huge volume of water hurtles downstream. It is reported that about 20 km east of the Rasuwagadhi Nepal-Tibet border crossing, a massive avalanche brought surging waters and sheets of mud down the Lhende River, sweeping away villages, settlements, and a large number of people downstream. The avalanche may have been triggered by a 4.4 magnitude earthquake recorded in the area just minutes earlier.

The border crossing connects Nepal's Rasuwa district with Gyirong county on the Tibetan side. Chinese media report similar loss of life and property across the border. The flash floods spread south from Rasuwa to Dhading, Gorkha and Nuwakot districts in Nepal, and the impact will be felt across the border in India. At least six hydropower

projects downstream have been wiped out, causing a loss of 405 MW of power capacity, constituting 12 per cent of the national total. This is a loss of power that Nepal can ill afford. Recovery and rehabilitation may take several years. Some video reports on this Himalayan tsunami are most disturbing. One sees a huge wall of water and mud tossing aside buildings, cars and frightened people with an elemental fury — a reminder once again of how utterly defenceless humanity can be before the raw power of nature.

Rasuwadaghi is the most important border crossing between Nepal and Tibet for trade as well as tourism, including for pilgrim tours to the holy Kailash-Mansarovar. It is reported that over 160 Indian pilgrims are missing. The hotels and guest houses in which they were staying were washed away in the flood. Cross-border trade and traffic are likely to remain suspended for the foreseeable future.

India has been quick to respond to the disaster in a friendly neighbouring country, sending urgent medical and food supplies and specialised rescue teams.

There are 48,000 sq km of glaciers spread over the Himalaya. Another 18,000 sq km are located in the Karakoram. Researchers have mapped over 5,000 glacial lakes in the Himalaya, of which about 500 are classified as "hazardous" or "significantly hazardous". There have been at least 388 recorded instances of GLOF so far in the Himalaya-Karakoram mountains but their frequency has been increasing in recent years.

In August 2025, there was a GLOF event in Dharali in Uttarakhand on the route to Gangotri, which caused large-scale loss of life and property. One should also re-



SHYAM SARAN

Despite compelling evidence, major hydropower projects continue to be pursued across the mountain zone, creating mounting risks to life and property. But these are being cynically ignored

call the 2013 Kedarnath flash flood caused by a combination of torrential rains and a GLOF at the Chorabari lake to the north. The surge of flood waters and debris washed away towns and settlements along the highway to Gangotri. In the immediate aftermath, there was talk of how the human carrying capacity of these remote pilgrimage places should be assessed and strictly observed. No construction 500 metres from the river banks was to be permitted hereafter. But no lessons have been learnt.

Hotels and guest houses have mushroomed once again on the river banks. During the pilgrimage season, Kedarnath may have a daily turnover of 15-20,000 pilgrims. Even at 18,000 feet elevation, there are pre-fab guest houses, restaurants and dhabas with gas cylinders being transported back and forth for heating and cooking. There are no proper arrangements for waste management. The Uttarakhand government is reportedly considering making Badrinath and Kedarnath open for pilgrimage the whole year round.

Hydropower development continues apace in the Himalayas despite the risk of GLOF and earthquakes. This is known to be an active seismic zone. In October 2023, a GLOF from the South Lhonak lake in Sikkim completely washed away the 1200 MW Teesta-III hydropower dam and power station. Earlier in 2021, a sudden flash flood triggered by a glacial collapse in Chamoli in Uttarakhand wiped out the Rishiganga Hydropower project and blocked the associated Chamoli tunnel.

Despite this mounting and compelling evidence, major hydropower projects continue to be pur-

sued across the mountain zone, creating mounting risks to life and property. But these are being cynically ignored.

There are several rivers that rise from the Tibetan plateau and flow through Nepal and India. There have been flash floods on some cross-border rivers that have caused large-scale damage on the Indian side.

The sharing of information and early warning between India and China has never been regular and has been subject to the state of their political relations. We now have, potentially, an even greater threat facing India from across the border with Tibet. China has begun constructing the gigantic Medog dam at the great bend of the Brahmaputra River just across the border. It is slated to deliver 300 billion kWh of power annually and will be several times larger than the largest hydro project in existence anywhere in the world, the Gezhouba on the Yangzi River, which is rated at 15.6 billion kWh of power annually. Chinese scientists have warned that the project sits very close to the Paizhen Fault, a major fracture in the Earth's crust, making it vulnerable to seismic events. Should there be a major earthquake in the project vicinity, there could be a massive discharge of flood waters and debris into India's Northeast.

The Himalayan glaciers have been a source of life-sustaining rivers for the entire Indo-Gangetic plain, populated by over 500 million people. It is this life-source that we are despoiling and for which our succeeding generations will pay the price. The mountains have sounded a loud warning of a cataclysm that lies round the corner. We ignore it at our collective peril.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and was ambassador to Nepal from 2002 to 2004

Context The Himalaya has been warning us for decades through repeated disasters but construction, pilgrimage traffic & hydropower have carried on regardless.

Facts

■ Nepal flood described as glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF): glacier fragment blocks a river, a lake forms, its loose banks burst, and the water hurtles downstream.

■ 5000 glacial lakes in the Himalaya : 500 as hazardous and at least 38 recorded GLOFs since last century.

■ Chain of warnings ignored: Kedarnath 2013 ; Chamoli 2021 ; South Lhonak / Teesta - III 2023 ; Dharali 2025 ; Rasuwa 2026.

Analytical Crux

The argument is not that Himalaya is dangerous but warnings keep arriving & building keeps going. Kedarnath 2013 produced rules on carrying capacity and a 500m setback from river banks, and the hotels came back. Chamoli and Teesta-III destroyed hydropower projects and more hydropower followed. This is a governance failure rather than a natural one. Hazard is mapped, known & demonstrated and it is state's decisions that turn a natural event into a disaster. The cross-border layer is what lifts it from environment into foreign policy. India and China share no regular early-warning mechanism and the Medog dam is rising on the Brahmaputra's great bend beside a fault line. However, no lessons have been learnt & mountain generations will pay price.

Verbatim Quotes

"The mountains have sounded loud warning of catastrophic times to come. Human greed & cupidity have continued to provoke the fury of the mountains"

-Shyam Saran

The untold cold war story of the Indus treaty



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EDITOR'S CHOICE / GEOPOLITICS / HISTORY

The Untold Cold War Story of the Indus Treaty

How Nehru, Ayub Khan and Eisenhower used water, development and diplomacy to navigate one of South Asia's most dangerous strategic disputes.



by Uttam Sinha · August 15, 2026 · 9 mins read · 1



Context Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 not as water-sharing agreement but as a cold war bargain, in which Nehru, Ayub Khan & Eisenhower brought different idea of security to the same table.

Facts

- The Indus Basin Development Fund pooled : US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and West Germany with India and Pakistan over a billion dollars.
- Time magazine called : encounter a "Baby Summit Meeting" in the context of "Asia's own cold war".
- 1951 : Lilienthal reframes Indus as an engineering problem; World Bank President Eugene Black brings in the World Bank's good offices.

Analytical Crux

The Indus Waters Treaty is taught as proof that India & Pakistan can cooperate. Each side signed to guard against a specific fear i.e. Pakistan against an upstream neighbour with geographical advantage, India against unpredictability in a hostile relationship and World Bank supplied money that made a physical division of the rivers possible. US wanted a stable subcontinent, so development finance did the work that diplomacy could not. Therefore, Treaty should carry both halves i.e. the engineering was clever, and the quarrel it was built to bypass never went anywhere.

Verbatim Quotes

"History demands to be looked at twice. The civil authority is & must remain, supreme. There is a need for development diplomacy as much as water diplomacy."

- Uttam Sinha

- **GS 2025, Paper II:** "Energy security constitutes the dominant kingpin of India's foreign policy, and is linked with India's overarching influence in Middle Eastern countries." How would you integrate energy security with India's foreign policy trajectories in the coming years?
- **PSIR 2025, Paper II:** India maintains strong ties with countries that will assure a free and open Indo-Pacific and guarantee greater connectivity with rest of the world. Analyze.
- **PSIR 2025, Paper II:** Discuss the potential role India can play in initiating a possible phase of trilateral economic engagement among India, China and Nepal.
- **PSIR 2025, Paper II:** Critically analyze the different phases of India's foreign policy since independence. How justified is S. Jaishankar's classification of the current phase as the phase of 'energetic diplomacy'?
- **PSIR 2023, Paper II:** "During the Cold War, the Non-Aligned Movement tried to become a 'Third force' in World Politics, but failed because it was too large and unwieldy." Discuss.
- **PSIR 2023, Paper II:** Narrate the various ways in which rapid environmental degradation is posing a serious threat to human security. Illustrate your answer with suitable examples.

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