A Splash in History: The Conflict and Compromise of the Indus Waters Treaty

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Individual Video Documentary

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I chose my topic in October 2017, when I read an NPR news article “Will The Next War Be Fought Over Water?” Curious, I researched online and discovered that water conflicts date back to early civilizations that settled in river valleys. I learned that hundreds of river basins globally, are shared by countries, raising the possibility of future conflicts given the growing demand for water. I came across the Indus Waters Treaty, one of the first successful transboundary water sharing agreements in modern history. I chose the treaty as my 2018 NHD topic because it symbolizes enduring compromise over a complex conflict between bitter rivals: India and Pakistan.

For my research, I began with secondary sources online. I learned that the conflict over the Indus waters arose unexpectedly when India and Pakistan were created from the sudden partition of British India in 1947. It took a novel proposal by an American, David Lilienthal, and a decade-long effort by the then-new World Bank to achieve a lasting compromise. The secondary sources then led me to Lilienthal’s proposal, which I retrieved from Princeton University’s library archives, primary source news articles, and a news video of the treaty signing. I also discovered memoranda, correspondence, engineering and financial estimates, oral histories, press releases, and a copy of the treaty in the World Bank’s digital archives.

For my documentary, I interviewed Michael Kugelman, a program director at the Woodrow Wilson Center, in Washington, DC. He noted that the treaty is seen as a case study of successful water sharing. I also attended a global panel, titled “A Matter of Survival: Learning to Cooperate Over Water” at the Wilson Center, which highlighted significant future water stress due to diminishing water resources and increasing global population.
For the national competition, I interviewed Prof. Aaron Wolf of Oregon State University, and Victor Mosoti, International Counsel at the World Bank, with responsibility for the Indus Waters Treaty. They explained how specialists at the World Bank helped achieve peaceful compromise over shared water when violent conflict seemed imminent, through extensive engineering studies, hydrological estimates, financial support, and creative water sharing.

I chose a documentary as my presentation category, because I could use videos, pictures, audio, and text to vividly tell the story of conflict and compromise as they unfolded through the history of this treaty.

My topic fits this year’s theme of Conflict and Compromise in History because the sharing of the Indus waters escalated into a major conflict between India and Pakistan, but the compromise, led by Lilienthal and the World Bank, prevented a larger global conflict and paved the way for nearly 60 years of continuing compromise over shared water. These lessons of history— that a successful compromise over water conflicts requires the help of neutral parties, financial support for water projects, and mechanisms to resolve future disputes — are particularly vital now, as a future threatened by severe water shortages demands cooperation over this essential natural resource in order for people to survive.
Bibliography

Primary Sources:

“6 NATIONS TO HELP IN INDUS PROJECT: U.S. and 5 Others to Provide $410,000,000 -- Pakistan and India Near Accord.” *New York Times*, 29 Feb. 1960. ProQuest Historical Newspapers [ProQuest]. From this news article, I learned that the financing of the treaty by New Zealand, West Germany, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States was critical to the actual treaty between India and Pakistan. The article explained that the financing was to support peaceful development of water projects, which was a key part of the World Bank proposal to achieve compromise.

Associated Press. *RIVER INDUS*. 1960, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xv_E94FaNus. This news bulletin video helped me understand the significance of the treaty and how it was portrayed in the media in that time period. The video bulletin documented that the treaty had an impact on tens of millions of people in India and Pakistan and that the patient work of the World Bank was instrumental to the conclusion of the treaty.

Black, Eugene. “Oral History Program- Interview with Eugene Black.” *World Bank Archives*, The World Bank, documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/373511468337173386/pdf/789420v20TRN0Borvie w0August06001961.pdf. Accessed 1 June 2018. In this oral history, recorded within a year of the signing of the Indus Waters Treaty, the president of the World Bank recalled the entire story of how the World Bank became involved in the conflict between India and Pakistan over the waters of the Indus and how the Bank staff ultimately worked out a compromise over nearly a decade of hard work. I was fascinated to read that he bought a
copy of the issue of Collier’s magazine (in which Mr. Lilienthal’s proposal to make shared use of the Indus waters was published), when it was never Mr. Black’s practice to buy a magazine. There were also interesting anecdotes about the hard demands by both countries and the skillful efforts of the World Bank to keep both sides engaged in what was a long-drawn process to reach the final compromise. All this information helped me understand how the World Bank responded to disagreements between the parties, and attempted to resolve the disagreements.


ProQuest Historical Newspapers [ProQuest]. This original opinion editorial was written by the President of the World Bank after the treaty was signed. Given Mr. Black’s leadership role in helping bring peaceful compromise in place of a potentially violent conflict, this source was particularly important as a reflection on the treaty and its relevance to water conflicts among other countries. It helped me understand that Indus Waters Treaty carried importance beyond India and Pakistan, offering valuable lessons to other countries which shared a river basin.

Cordier, Andrew. “Andrew Cordier, W.A.B. Iliff.” Received by W.A.B. Iliff, Vice President of World Bank, World Bank PubDocs, World Bank, 6 Aug. 2014, pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/25481412170146433/wbg-archives-1787797.pdf. This source is the letter from Andrew Cordier, Executive Assistant to the UN Secretary General, to William Iliff, the Vice President of the World Bank. In this letter, Cordier confirmed that the UN Secretary General, Mr. Dag Hammarskjold, would undertake the responsibility of appointing an arbitrator, as part of the dispute resolution procedures being considered in
the Indus Waters Treaty. This communication was helpful because it made me learn that global institutions like the United Nations were part of the effort to achieve lasting compromise over the Indus waters conflict.

Grimes, Paul. “Indus River Pact Signed in Karachi.” The New York Times, 20 Sept. 1960. ProQuest Historical Newspapers [ProQuest]. This primary source was helpful because it captured the significance of the Indus Waters Treaty being signed nearly 13 years after the conflict first began over shared use of the waters of the Indus. I learned that the Indus Waters Treaty was a culmination of more than eight years of negotiations under the leadership of the World Bank.

Grimes, Paul. “Pakistan to Sign Indus River Pact with India Today.” New York Times, 19 Sept. 1960. ProQuest Historical Newspapers [ProQuest]. This source was helpful because it was written on the day that the Indus Waters Treaty was to be signed by Nehru and Ayub, the leaders of India and Pakistan. It also helped me realize the scope of the Indus in terms of its volume of water — that its annual flow was sufficient to submerge the entire state of Texas under a foot of water.

gave me insight into the engineering and financial estimates work that went into the design of the Treaty as well.

“India and Pakistan.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 1 Nov. 1960, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1960/11/india-and-pakistan/306376/. This source is an article written almost two weeks after the signing of the Indus Waters Treaty. It verified information that was relevant at the time of the signing and provided useful editorial perspective on the multiple failed attempts at compromise before both sides agreed to the World Bank’s proposal.

“INDIA, PAKISTAN TO MEET: Will Resume Negotiations on Indus Water Dispute.” *New York Times*, 21 Oct. 1954. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers [ProQuest]*. This article showed me that India and Pakistan wanted to find a compromise as they agreed to continue negotiations even after a disagreement over the major 1954 World Bank proposal. This article also showed me the continued efforts of the World Bank to try and get India and Pakistan to find agreement just months after a failed proposal, with the World Bank working on another proposal.

“Indus Supplemental Agreement, No 64/10.” *World Bank*, World Bank EArchives, 5 Aug. 2014, pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/562941412191641798/wbg-archives-1803638.pdf. I used Press Release No.64/10 to understand which countries financed the treaty. I took a screenshot, which I used in my documentary, of the Press Release to show which countries financed the treaty and how much money they contributed towards the treaty. It was interesting to see that many countries were supportive of the treaty because of their desire to prevent a wider violent conflict from breaking out.

“Labour In Power.” *Daily Herald*, 27 July 1945. From this newspaper, I learned that the Labour Party was elected in the 1945 British Election, and that this election result was to bring about fundamental change in the British colonies, including, the British Raj. I used a picture of the newspaper headlines in my documentary.

Lilienthal, David E. “Another ‘Korea’ in the Making?” *Collier’s*, 4 Aug. 1951, pp. 22–58. This source was a very important one that I was able to find and retrieve from the Princeton University archives. In it, Mr. David Lilienthal mead his proposal for peaceful shared use of the Indus waters between India and Pakistan, while also preventing violent bloodshed that could have spiraled into a wider conflict drawing in the United States. I found it powerful that he compared the situation to be similar to the Korean conflict that led to war. It was helpful to see examples provided by Lilienthal, like the New York Port Authority, to manage a joint agreement between India and Pakistan.

Macmillan, Harold. “UK Prime Minister- Eugene Black.” Received by Eugene Black, 17 Sept. 1960. This letter from the UK Prime Minister to Eugene Black, congratulates the World Bank President on the successful signing of the Indus Waters Treaty and gives the World
Bank credit for solving the impossible task of getting India and Pakistan to compromise over the sharing of the Indus waters. This gave me an understanding that the United Kingdom and other nations appreciated the World Bank's efforts in achieving compromise.

McHugh, Margaret. “Chief Justice of US Supreme Court, Eugene Black.” Received by Eugene Black, World Bank PubDocs, World Bank, 6 Aug. 2014, pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/254814121701464525/archives-17877797.pdf. This source is the letter from Margaret McHugh, Executive Assistant to the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, to Eugene Black, the President of the World Bank. In this letter, McHugh confirmed that the Chief Justice, Mr. Earl Warren, would undertake the responsibility of appointing neutral members to a Court of Arbitration to resolve disputes under the Indus Waters Treaty. This communication was eye opening, because I was previously unaware that even the U.S. Supreme Court was involved in the United States' efforts to resolve the conflict over the Indus waters.

New York Times. “Eisenhower Lauds Indus Negotiators.” New York Times, 8 Sept. 1960. ProQuest Historical Newspapers [ProQuest]. This information included Dwight's Eisenhower's unique quote on the successful conclusion of the Indus Waters Treaty. This was helpful because I realized that the United States viewed the signing of the treaty against the background of increasing threat of communism worldwide in the post-Korean War Cold War era. The treaty prevented war from breaking out and kept the United States engaged in the ongoing development and shared use of the waters of the Indus. I particularly liked the part where President Eisenhower stated that “free world owed a
vote of thanks to the men responsible for the agreement.” I used a screenshot of Eisenhower’s quote in my documentary.

Stratton, J. A. “J.A. Stratton, Eugene Black.” Received by Eugene Black, President of the World Bank, *World Bank PubDocs*, World Bank, 6 Aug. 2014, pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/25481412170146433/wbg-archives-1787797.pdf. This source is the letter from J.A. Stratton, former President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), to Eugene Black, the President of the World Bank. In this letter, Stratton confirmed that he would undertake the responsibility of designating the Engineering member of a Court of Arbitration, under the proposed dispute resolution process. From this letter, I learned that highly regarded technical administrators like the MIT President were involved in the U.S. efforts to achieve compromise over the Indus waters conflict.

“The Indus Waters Treaty: A History.” *Stimson Center*, 19 Sept. 1960, www.stimson.org/the-indus-waters-treaty-a-history. This source provided extensive information on the attempted solutions between India and Pakistan over the waters of the Indus. It was an important resource in my research because it provided me with a useful overall narrative on the conflict and compromise of the Indus Waters Treaty. In addition, it was this resource that led me to learn about the work of Dr. David Michel and request an interview.

“The World Bank Group Archives.” *World Bank*, World Bank Group Archives, 6 Mar. 2015, pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/643131426779491238/wbg-archives-1787263.pdf. This source helped me understand the key features that were changed over time to get both
India and Pakistan to come to final agreement. I used screenshots of specific parts of this document in my documentary to show how the proposals changed over time as the World Bank worked on reaching compromise.


siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSOUTHASIA/Resources/223497-1105737253588/Indus WatersTreaty1960.pdf. This primary source was the official Indus Waters Treaty, so it had all the terms and conditions of the compromise. It was very helpful to view the actual document, as it gave me a perspective on the organization of the terms and conditions and enabled me to review specific aspects, such as the dispute resolution process. I used a screenshot of the title of the treaty in my documentary.

“Waters of the Indus.” The New York Times, 2 Feb. 1958. ProQuest Historical Newspapers [ProQuest]. This source helped me understand how the treaty negotiations were perceived during the time of negotiations. In addition, this article helped me realize that making a treaty over this river was not only a matter of politics, but a matter of life and death.

“Way Out Of Indian Deadlock.” The Times of India, 4 June 1947. This newspaper provided information on Nehru and Jinnah’s plans after the British granted independence. From the headlines on the first page, I learned that Jawaharlal Nehru wanted India to be unified, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah wanted a separate Muslim country.

“World Bank Official Opens New Attempt To Settle India-Pakistan Water Dispute.” New York Times, 8 June 1957. ProQuest Historical Newspapers [ProQuest]. This source showed
me that the 1954 World Bank proposal became the basis for all subsequent negotiations. In addition, the article informed me about the terms the World Bank tried to change in order to get both parties to agree.
Secondary Sources:

Aquastat. “Indus River Basin.” *Aquastat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, 2011, www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/basins/indus/indus-CP_eng.pdf. This source included information on the Indus River Basin which helped me understand the geography of the area. Importantly, it gave useful reference information about the relevance of the Indus River system to agriculture in the Indus basin. This source was very important to my understanding of the Indus river basin.

Beyond The Mirage. *Beyond The Mirage | Full Documentary*. 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKcaGYrKsoU. This documentary produced by media communications professionals at the University of Arizona helped me understand that water conflicts are not limited to developing countries, but are present right here in the United States. The documentary examines the water sharing arrangements and conflicts between the states that share the waters of the Colorado river. I used an excerpt in my documentary to show that freshwater could be the source of the next world war.

Britannica Kids. “Jawaharlal Nehru.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Jawaharlal-Nehru/353524. I used this source to learn about Jawaharlal Nehru, who was the Indian National Congress Leader and the Prime Minister of India during the signing of the Indus Waters Treaty. I used a picture from this source in my documentary.

CBS This Morning. *Cape Town Is on the Verge of Running out of Water*. 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRSJBz0EoBQ. This video showed me that the threat of people running out of water is not in the future, but that it is already happening in highly
populated cities today. I used part of this video in my documentary to highlight how major cities running out of water is already a reality.

Dalrymple, William. “The Mutual Genocide of Indian Partition.” The New Yorker, The New Yorker, 19 June 2017, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple. This article provided a vivid description of the bloody violence and the reasons behind the partition of British India into two new nations, India and Pakistan. I used a picture from this source in my documentary, to illustrate the tragic consequences of the partition on people in India and Pakistan.

Dawn, Black. “Sound of an Angel.” Youtube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=NguiRFLM4M. I used this music for the geographical context, historical background, compromise, and impact parts of my documentary.


Hague Institute. Water Diplomacy: Mitigating Conflict and Promoting Security. Youtube, The Hague Institute, 8 Apr. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg00ycUuqZk. This video taught me that water cooperation is an important topic that is becoming increasingly
prevalent, as shown by the creation of the Hague Institute. I used pictures and short clips from the video to illustrate the importance of water towards the end of my documentary.


IndiaToday.in. “Radcliffe Line to Divide India-Pakistan Was Formed This Day: Read about It Here.” *India Today*, India Today, 17 Aug. 2016, www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/radcliffe-line-335614-2016-08-17. This source included details about the Radcliffe Line and I realized how much of an impact these borders had on ordinary people who ended up migrating across the new partition lines after the new countries of India and Pakistan. I used a picture from this source in my documentary to illustrate the vast numbers of people who tried to flee on trains after the partition turned violent.

Institute, Pacific. “Water Conflict Chronology List.” *Water Conflict Chronology Timeline List*, www2.worldwater.org/conflict/list/. This source maintains a rich timeline of conflicts over water, dating back to the earliest civilizations. I used this source to learn about the water conflicts that have arisen in the modern era. I then used this information to create a global map of modern water conflicts in my documentary.
Kugelman, Michael. “Indus Waters Treaty.” 17 Jan. 2018. As an expert on South Asia and the Indus Waters Treaty, in this in-person interview, Mr. Kugelman helped me understand that the Indus Waters Treaty offers a model of compromise over shared water resources and that having the World Bank as a neutral interlocutor was important to bridge the disagreement between India and Pakistan over the shared waters of the Indus. He also made me aware that the partition animosity added to the conflict over the water sharing. I used two clips from my interview in my documentary to document these points.

Marshall, Professor Peter. “History - British History in Depth: The British Presence in India in the 18th Century.” BBC, BBC, 17 Feb. 2011, www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/east_india_01.shtml. This source included information on British rule over India, which helped me understand the historical background before, and leading up to, the partition of the British Raj. This information was important to my understanding of the British role in Indus river basin, when creating my documentary.

Michel, David. “2018 National History Day Project -- Request for Interview.” 2018 National History Day Project -- Request for Interview, 2 Jan. 2018. After coming across Dr. Michel’s name in an article on the Stimson Center website, I reached out to Dr. Michel with a request for an in-person interview. In this e-mail, Dr. Michel, Senior Program Manager of the Transboundary Water Management Department at the Stockholm Water institute, responded that he was on sabbatical in Stockholm, Sweden, but offered to do an interview by Skype. He also suggested that I interview Mr. Michael Kugelman of the Woodrow Wilson Center. Subsequently, he also provided several reports discussing U.S.
leadership on water, peace and security which helped me understand the role of the
United States in providing leadership on maintaining peace on water security matters.

Mosoti, Victor. “The Indus Waters Treaty.” 28 May 2018. As an international counsel at the
World Bank, with responsibility for the Indus Waters Treaty, Mr. Mosoti was an
important interview subject for my Nationals documentary video. I was introduced to Mr.
Mosoti by Dr. Wolf. Mr. Mosoti provided a detailed background on how the World Bank
became involved in the Indus Waters dispute and the dedication of the Bank staff to
creating an effective compromise. He also made the important statement that without
World Bank’s financial support, there would likely be no Indus Waters Treaty today. I
used two clips from my detailed interview with Dr. Mosoti in my documentary.

MSNBC. Michael Moore On Flint's Future | MTP Daily | MSNBC. 2016,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=MflUu76_wjw. This video helped me realize the severe
impact of poor water quality. I used part of this video in which the newscaster states that
Michigan's governor called the Flint Water Crisis a state of emergency, to convey the
different ways in which water can affect lives: water needs to not only be available, but
also needs to be of usable quality.

underwent major crises, especially due to lack of water. Delivering water to the crisis
areas was extremely important to sustaining people, especially children. This video
shows live footage of children in Puerto Rico waiting for and receiving water. Given that
water shortages can occur due to weather events, I used a clip from this video to convey that in my documentary.

Orbital Music. “Best Dramatic Background Music For Videos.” Youtube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=8H4hlfVcxpk. I used this music for the my documentary's introduction, the conflict section, and my documentary's finish. The suspenseful mood of the music helped underline the importance of water in my documentary.

“RIVER BASINS COMPONENT.” Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme - RIVER BASINS COMPONENT, 4 June 2016, twap-rivers.org/#global-basins. From this source, I learned that there are 286 global transboundary river basins involving over 100 countries, and learnt that most transboundary river basins are in Asia and Africa, in areas that have high population density and drier climates. This helped me understand that not all river basins are similar in their risk for conflict. The source also includes a list of risk indicators and helped me understand that there need to be systematic ways, through treaties like the Indus Waters Treaty, to address the water conflicts that are bound to arise in the future.

“Shared Waters: Conflict, Cooperation and Transformation with Aaron Wolf.” Performance by Aaron Wolf, 360 North, 9 Dec. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=zV0D0Znw63M. This video of a lecture by Dr. Wolf helped me appreciate that cooperation over water can survive conflicts over other issues. I learnt of the powerful example that in the middle of an actual war, India made payment to Pakistan that was due under the Indus Water Treaty. I used this clip of the video in my documentary.
Sile, Azza Wee. *India Could Use Indus River Water Treaty to Pressure Pakistan over LOC Tensions*. CNBC, 5 Oct. 2016, 11:28 pm,
www.cnbc.com/2016/10/05/india-could-use-indus-river-water-treaty-to-pressure-pakistan-over-loc-tensions.html. From this website, I used a picture of the Indus River for my documentary. I also learned that current Indian Prime Minister, Modi, stated that “Blood and Water cannot flow together,” when referring to disagreements between India and Pakistan over water and other national security matters.

Solomon, Steven. “Will The Next War Be Fought Over Water?” *NPR*, NPR, 3 Jan. 2010,
www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122195532. This source was the article that started my interest in the topic of water and the potential for violent conflicts in the future due to shortages of water. This source was useful in establishing the base of my research, with journalist Solomon explaining why water is the most critical natural resource. The article helped me understand why countries which share a water resource could have bitter disagreement about how the water should be shared.

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. “Louis Mountbatten, 1st Earl Mountbatten.”
*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1 Feb. 2018,
www.britannica.com/biography/Louis-Mountbatten-1st-Earl-Mountbatten. I used this source to learn about Louis Mountbatten, the last Indian Viceroy who convinced both Jinnah and Nehru that partition of the British Raj into the separate new nations of India and Pakistan was the best option. I also used a picture from this source in my documentary.
“The Reith Lectures, Cyril Radcliffe: Power and the State: 1951.” *BBC Radio 4*, BBC, www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00h9lwd. I used this source to learn more about Cyril Radcliffe, the British lawyer who was assigned to draw the borders of India and Pakistan in just five weeks. I also used an image from this source in my documentary.

The World Bank. “Featured Exhibit -- The World Bank's Role as Mediator in the 1950s.” *World Bank*, World Bank, www.worldbank.org/en/about/archives/featured-exhibit-the-world-banks-role-as-mediator-in-the-1950s. This source published by the World Bank itself, helped me understand how crucial the World Bank was to the making of the Indus Waters compromise. In addition, it helped me understand that it took many years of negotiations to reach a compromise and at the time of the negotiation over the treaty, it was a priority for the World Bank.

Wolf, Aaron. “Indus Waters Treaty.” 22 May 2018. A professor on Transboundary Water Sharing at Oregon State University, and a recipient of the Heinz Award in 2015, Dr. Wolf is considered by many to be one of the global leaders on transboundary water conflicts and sharing arrangements. In my interview with Dr. Wolf over Skype, he conveyed the importance of water to all human aspirations, and stated that transboundary waters can be a source of compromise, not just conflict. I used this clip in my documentary. He also helped me realize that when you are communicating around water, you are communicating around every facet of life.

conference titled “A Matter of Survival: Learning to Cooperate over Water” on January 16, 2018 at the Woodrow Wilson Center. I learned a lot about the growing threat of water conflicts across regions of the world and the importance of water cooperation and financial support from experts, such as Paula Dobriansky, Danilo Turk, and Sundeep Waslekar. I used three clips from the official footage of the conference in my documentary, to illustrate the threat of violent water conflicts and the fact that cooperation over the sharing of water was essential to survival.


Zamindar, Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali. “Why the Partition Is Not an Event of the Past.” The Wire, The Wire, 10 Sept. 2017, thewire.in/175868/partition-not-thing-past/. This source included extensive information on the partition of British India into the independent nations of India and Pakistan, such as the fact that Mountbatten moved the partition date up, leaving Radcliffe with only a few weeks to draw the partition lines. This information enabled me to better appreciate the time pressure of the partition and how this affected the handling of the Indus water system. In addition, I used a picture from this source in my documentary.