

# Water crises and national unity

## I. Introduction

### I.I. How water crises impact on national unity.

a. Unequal water distribution creates mistrust among provinces.

Example: Punjab-Sindh water dispute.

Example: Kalabagh Dam controversy.

~ Indus Water Agreement

~ Indus water Apportionment Accord, 1991.

~ Hassan Abbas, Pakistan's drift into extremism.

b. Water conflicts damage cooperative federalism.

Example: C.C.T deadlocks on water issues.

Example: Centralized control of rivers

~ Hamid Khan, Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan

c. water scarcity forces people  
to migrate.

Example: That migration - to Karachi  
Rural Sindh to urban  
Slums.

→ World bank, Groundwater depletion in Pak.

d. Urban water conflicts increase  
Violence in cities.

Example, Water tanker maps  
in Karachi.

Example, Informal settlement clashes.

→ Arif Hasan, Karachi: The Land Issue

e. Loss of trust in state institutions  
due to water governance.

Example, failed water  
storage planning.

Example, Corruption in  
irrigation departments.

→ Pakistan Council of Research in  
Water Resources (PCRWR)

i. lack of water management  
worsens floods and droughts

Example: 2022 floods

Example: Repeated droughts  
in Balochistan.

~ NDMA Reports, IPCC Climate Assessments

j. water scarcity is often  
framed as ethnic discrimination

Example: Sindhi nationalism

Example: Baloch movements

~ Akbar S. Zaidi, Issues in  
Pakistan's Economy.

k. water crisis hits poor regions  
harder, widening economic gaps.

Example: Tharparkar drought  
increasing poverty.

Example: Southern-Punjab facing  
water-driven underdevelopment

l. Instead of unity, dam creates  
provincial mistrust -

Example: Kalabagh Dam opposition

Example: Delays in Diamer-Bhaska Dam

~ Shahid Farid Bukhri, Pakistan's Economic Development

## Introducing

"Water is the driving force of all nature" - Leonardo da Vinci. Water is the most vital natural resource for human survival, economic development, and social stability. In Pakistan, however, rapid population growth, climate change, poor water governance, and inequitable distribution have transformed water scarcity into a national crisis. Pakistan is approaching absolute water scarcity, posing serious threats not only to agriculture and the economy but also to national unity. The water crisis has created mistrust among provinces, damaged cooperative federalism, forced people to migrate and increased violence in cities. Moreover, it has lost trust in state institutions due to water governance

and reduced food production,  
thereby straining social cohesion.  
Thus, the water crisis in Pakistan  
is not merely an environmental  
or technical issue; it is a multi-  
dimensional challenge that directly  
undermines national unity. Therefore,  
understanding how water scarcity  
impacts national unity is essential  
to safeguard Pakistan's federal  
stability, social harmony, and  
long-term national integration.