

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 Apportionment~~

~ Indus water Apportionment Accord, 1991.

~ Hassan Abbasi 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: Their 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 - Bhasha Dam

~ Shahid Javid Burki, 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

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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.